

Vestigia  
by  
George Fleming









63 West 38th Street  
New York City  
1924

From a Dead  
Giraffe who

has failed —  
in love

Mother

Cedra  
Bill



VESTIGIA

*Uniform with this volume, by the same author,*

## THE HEAD OF MEDUSA.

*A NOVEL.*

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ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

# VESTIGIA

BY

GEORGE FLEMING

AUTHOR OF "KISMET," "MIRAGE," "THE HEAD OF MEDUSA"

"Vestigia nulla retrorsum"

BOSTON

ROBERTS BROTHERS

1884

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*DEDICATED TO*

F. H.

(OF MARIGOLA),

—*to know whom is indeed a “liberal education” in all that is gracious and good,—in loving memory of that bright March morning, years ago, when we met in a certain street in Leghorn.*

LONDON, 1883.

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# VESTIGIA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### MOTHER AND SON.

IT was nearly five o'clock of a raw and windy afternoon in the month of March, 187-, when a young man, Bernardino de' Rossi by name, came hastily out of an inner room of the Telegraph Office building at Leghorn, letting the heavy swinging door close sharply behind him with a disagreeable sound.

The room which he entered was one reserved for the use of the Government clerks. Its floor was bare ; its high walls, painted the same dull uniform yellow as the rest of the building, were lighted from above by a row of small square windows, crossed with rusty bars of iron,—an arrangement which involuntarily suggested a prison ward ; and there was little to contradict this fancy in the appearance of the line of high desks ranged along three sides of the room, or in the expression of the figures bending over them.

The names and dates and rude caricatures scrawled over every available space of plaster and woodwork seemed indeed an indication that such absorbed industry was not the invariable rule; but on that especial afternoon a dead silence prevailed. To one accustomed to the ways of the place it was a significant silence, broken only by the monotonous ticking of the telegraph wires heard through the half-open door of the adjoining room, and the rapid scratching of many pens.

At De Rossi's entrance one of the younger clerks, a mere lad, with pale watery eyes and a Jewish profile, looked up from his writing.

"Well, Dino?" he murmured anxiously.

De Rossi glanced at him and hesitated.

"It is all right. Only—I'm off."

"Not—not dismissed, Dino?"

"Dismissed. Turned out. Turned off. Sent away without a character, like a bad cook. Put it any way you prefer it, it all comes to the same thing. But it really does not matter in the least. It was sure to come to that in the end. There is nothing for—for any one to be sorry about. So don't trouble—don't let any one trouble himself on my account," the young man added rapidly, his face lighting up with a sudden very pleasant smile.

"But—Dino—"

"Who is making that noise? I ask you, who is making that noise there? By Heaven! you are enough to drive a man mad amongst you. Chatter! chatter! chatter! Nothing but gossip and chatter, like a parcel of idle women after mass. Government employees you call yourselves; my word, it is a useful kind of employment that," interposed the large pale-faced man, who occupied a desk by himself, in the warmest corner, beside the stove, at the far end of the room. "You were not speaking? Don't tell me, sir. I say you are always speaking,—and to no purpose. Chatter, chatter, chatter! and slamming doors —"

"Come, come, Sor Checco. Come now; the lads mean no harm by it. I'll answer for them. They mean no harm," observed another large, middle-aged individual, who was elaborately filling up an empty telegraph form, standing beside one of the desks provided for the use of the public. He spoke in a good-natured, husky voice. Despite the cold, the yellow fur collar of his enormous cloak was thrown wide open upon his shoulders, and from time to time he paused heavily in his writing, to rub his forehead with the blue and red checked handkerchief which he carried, rolled up in a ball, in his left hand. "And as for their talking — as for their talking," he went on soothingly, "why, what can you

expect? Every donkey prefers his own bray. And our young friend's little accident with the door there — ”

“ Accident! accident! Who believes in accidents? Any fool can call a thing an accident,” retorted Sor Checco, with increasing irritation, standing up and giving an impatient push to his chair. The chair immediately slipped back against the nearest end of the fender, bringing the fire-irons to the ground with a loud rattle and crash.

There was a general laugh at the head clerk's expense, under cover of which Dino walked quietly over to his old place under the window, unlocked a drawer with a key which he took from his pocket, and began putting together some loose papers and a manuscript book.

One by one the clerks suspended their work, turning their heads to watch him, but no one ventured to speak again until worthy Sor Giovanni — having written out his despatch and read it over carefully, checking off each word on the thick square fingers of his right hand — turned about with a satisfied air, and catching sight of young De Rossi's occupation, “ Why, lad, lad,” he said, reprovingly, “ you're never packing up your things to go on account of six cross words and a sour look? Come, come, my boy, leave that sort of thing to the women folk, — God bless

them! But a man can't afford to catch fire every time he strikes a match. Come now. Here is something different for you to do. Why, lad, if bad temper were a fever there wouldn't be hospitals enough to hold us all. Come now. Send off this despatch for me like a good fellow. And no nonsense about mistaking the address. Visconti, Guiseppe, No. 20, Via Tordinona, Rome. There it is all written out for you as plain as the blessed cross on the roof of the Duomo. And here is my franc waiting to pay for it. Fifteen words. You may count it over, you'll find no cheating. I'll answer for it, you won't."

He laughed a good-natured satisfied laugh, and dabbed at his forehead with his checked handkerchief. "Come, my boy," he said very good-humoredly, leaning confidentially across the top of the desk, and pushing over the paper and the money.

Dino looked up with a sharp gesture of impatience. "Oh, go to some one else!" he began; and then seeing the other's beaming face so near his, and being always ready to be affected by a kind word or a kind look, "I would serve you if I could, Sor Giovanni," he added quickly; "but the fact is—I'm no longer a clerk here. My name was taken off the books this morning. I'm dismissed."

"Dismissed! Why, lad—why, God bless my soul! what have you been doing then?" cried Sor Giovanni huskily, bringing his hand down heavily upon the table.

Dino's face flushed; he gave a little laugh. "Ah, that is the question!" he said, turning away with some slight embarrassment and beginning to fasten up his papers: they were letters chiefly.

"It *is* the question; there I quite agree with you. It is very much the question," added the head clerk, Sor Checco, coming forward and resting both hands upon the back of the desk. He looked at the young man with a hard glance. "Before you leave,—and, as I had the honor of telling the Director this morning, it is a question of your leaving or of mine,—before you leave you will perhaps have the goodness to explain the nature of those documents which—"

"I shall have the goodness to explain precisely nothing at all," retorted De Rossi promptly, standing up and thrusting the package of papers into the breast pocket of his coat. With the change of attitude every vestige of hesitation seemed to leave his bearing. "To *you*, Sor Giovanni," he said, looking at him very gratefully, "I have to express my regret that circumstances prevent my doing you so trifling a service—"

"But—God bless my soul! But I don't un-

derstand. Come now, lad, what is the row all about? I don't understand in the least; upon my soul I don't. Why, look here. Here am I, so to speak,"—he unfolded one corner of the checked handkerchief,—“here am I writing my despatches as quiet as a sleeping babe. And there is Sor Checco, poor man! busy in his own corner and thinking of nothing. And here are you—”

Dino smiled. “Was Sor Checco thinking of nothing? It would be a pity to interrupt him. Besides, to him I have nothing to say. He knows my opinion of him,” the young man added sharply, with a sudden light of indignation flashing in his eyes. “To the others here,—to my old companions—”

He looked down the long room, but at the sound of his words each head was bent lower over its work. De Rossi's face flushed and turned pale like a girl's. He bit his lip, where the smile seemed suddenly to have grown fixed and unnatural, and turned to a peg on the wall from which was hanging a long gray ulster coat. He took down this coat and put it on, buttoning it across his breast with a deliberation which could not entirely prevent his fingers from trembling. He took down his hat, and stood there for an instant facing the entire room. The light had almost faded away from the small

high windows, but there was not a corner of those sordid yellow walls, not a face among those averted faces with which he had not felt familiar. Why, even the chief clerk's fault-finding had its associations with many an old foolish light-hearted joke,—he had grown accustomed to the discontent, as a man grows accustomed to the rough handle of his daily tool. “I wish you a very good afternoon. And—and I’m very much obliged to you for your kindness,” the young fellow said abruptly, turning to Sor Giovanni and putting out his hand. And then yielding to an impulse for which he never quite forgave himself, “I have worked here every day for the last four years, and there is not a man in this room whom I would not have called my friend,” he said, bitterly enough, and put his hat upon his head and walked out of the room before them all.

As he passed before the young clerk to whom he had spoken on first entering, the boy moved uneasily in his chair, muttering some indistinct word; but at the same moment Sor Checco’s voice was heard giving a harsh command that the gas be lighted without further delay. “And ‘tis time surely for more light, when we lose so brilliant an example,” added a tall cadaverous-looking youth, who had hitherto sat silent, keeping a small but wary eye upon the stormy

countenance of the patron. Dino could remember years after the pang of bitter and impotent resentment which made him start and clench his fist outside there in the long cold corridor at the echo of the sound of their laughter.

It was a cold clear night, with many stars and a piercing March wind, which set the gas lamps flickering in the deserted Via Grande ; for it was a Saturday, and all the Jewish shops were closed ; and even the few Christian vendors scattered here and there along the street seemed for once to have renounced both orthodoxy and profit, and were for the most part engaged in putting up their shutters with cold and hasty hands. As he turned, with the automatic accuracy of a man going homewards, out of the main thoroughfare into one of those many narrow streets which lie between the Via Grande and the port, it was indeed a wintry blast which struck the young man full in the face making him catch his breath with a gasp and thrust his hands deeper into the pockets of his long thin coat ; but what was this violence of the outer air in comparison to that other fiercer storm, that tumult of hurt pride, of wounded disregarded sensibility, the passionate indignation, the hundred mad impulses and promptings which tore at each other and contradicted each other inside his breast ? The

recollection of his own last words came back to him, and every nerve quivered. He could have struck himself with anger and disgust at his own weakness in having spoken them. "To have called them—*them*—my friends!" he muttered half aloud. "If they were laughing at *that!*" he thought, and his face grew hot and cold again as he remembered their laughter.

It was not until he had actually quitted the street, and was rapidly running up the dark stair of a narrow building, that another thought seemed to strike him with a sudden power to slacken his impatient footstep and hold him, hesitating, outside a closed door. "And the mother? what will she say to it all?" he asked himself, and looked at the latch-key in his hand. An expression of mingled weariness and defiance, the expression of a man who expects to find but short and scanty indulgence between the four walls of his home, crossed his face for an instant. He opened the door and went in.

First came a little hall, a mere passage-way; beyond that again was a large low room, somewhat empty of furniture, with blackened rafters which divided the ceiling into squares. The walls were white-washed, scrupulously clean, and quite devoid of character, but here and there a touch of faded color—the blurred outline of a flying figure, some heavy tracery of fruit or

flower, or line of tarnished gold—still spoke of the original painting of the roof. Facing the door a narrow window led out upon a rickety iron balcony, high hung beneath the eaves of the old house, and from thence in the daytime the view was superb, stretching across the Old Port and the New, over the sea, to the pale vision-like peaks of Carrara.

But to-night the curtain was close drawn. A single oil lamp, with a long wick, was burning on the mantel-piece ; its light fell upon the bent gray head of an elderly woman, who was knitting busily, and only occasionally moving a little to cast an anxious glance at the contents of an earthen vessel which stood before the fire.

She looked up, with an air of almost painful suspense in eyes which had once been celebrated for their beauty, and which, even yet, shone clear and dark beneath the troubled brows ; she looked up, still holding her knitting with both hands, as her son entered.

“ Well, Dino ? ” she said breathlessly.

“ Well, mother. You see I was not mistaken. I thought I should come home rather later to-night,” the young man answered, with an attempt at speaking easily. He came and stood before the fire, spreading out his chilled fingers to the warmth of the blaze. “ It is a cold night. I don’t know when I can remember so cold a

night," he said absently. And then, rousing himself with an effort, "Where is the little one? where is Palmira?" he asked, glancing around him.

"She has gone to spend the afternoon at Drea's. Italia came for her. It is Italia's birthday, and they said you had arranged to call for the child," returned his mother slowly. She bent her head still lower over her knitting. "You will want your supper before you go out again. It is spoiled now with keeping. It has been ready for you this hour past. I knew nothing about it. I knew nothing of when you intended to come back. Perhaps that is one of the things which you had already settled — with Italia."

"Dear mother, I am so sorry. But indeed it was unavoidable," said Dino soothingly. He added in a lower voice, "Even this morning I did not think there was much chance for me. And the moment I heard the Director's conditions I saw it was all up. They wanted to get rid of me,—my being at the demonstration was a mere pretext. Don't worry yourself about it, mother; pray don't. It must have come to this in the end. They wanted — they all wanted to get rid of me. And perhaps, all things considered, it is not so much to be wondered at."

"Wonder? Do you think I have lived until now to wonder at any trouble overtaking us —

at *any* misfortune?" interrupted Sora Catarina passionately. She took a few hasty impatient stitches, holding her work up close to her eyes, which burned painfully with hot tears of repressed disappointment. Then she rose abruptly, sweeping the balls of wool into some inner pocket; she took up the lamp, placing it upon a centre table. "You are cold. You had better eat," she said briefly.

"Thank you, mother. I am not hungry."

"There were potatoes, too, cooked as you like them. But that was an hour ago," she went on, taking a dish from the warm hearth and looking into it.

"Oh, it is sure to be good. It is my own fault that I am not hungry," said Dino. He threw off his outer coat and drew his chair nearer to the table.

"Mother."

"Well?"

She turned her head slowly towards him, and for the first time that evening their eyes met,—dark serious eyes, almost the only trace of resemblance between mother and son, the only feature they had in common. "Well?" she repeated after an instant's pause. She was still standing; now she crossed the room to fetch another candle, which she lighted and placed before him. "There is no reason you should eat your supper

in the dark. It is little enough pleasure that comes here in the daytime, goodness knows. But you never did care about being made comfortable."

"Mother, I think—I have been thinking of asking Drea if he does not want another hand at his work. I can manage a boat if I can do nothing else. And it will be something to go on with for the present. That is, if you have no objection," said Dino, still looking at her rather anxiously.

"And if I had, what difference would it make? Will you not go your own way as your father did before you? What good has ever come of my objecting?" She had taken up her knitting again, and was turning it over and over between her trembling fingers. "It is the same story; it began in the same way. It began so with your father. I have seen it all before," she said in a hopeless sort of voice, and with a half sob.

Dino looked up quickly at the sound, and seemed about to speak, but her face was turned away from him. He remained silent, pushing away the untouched food before him, and leaning both arms upon the table.

"Are you going to that—to that place again to-night? I will never mention its name,—to that club of yours? But of course you are. It

is the same story over again. I tell you, like father like son. And sometimes—sometimes I ask myself what is the use of it all? Though I should work my hands off," she said passionately, "though I work my hands off trying to keep the place comfortable for you; trying to be respectable and keep up appearances, what is the good? As your dear Drea says, can one man lift both ends of a beam at the same time? And I'm tired of struggling against what I cannot help. Have your own way. I've tried hard enough, God knows, but there are no sails will keep a stone from sinking." She got up restlessly from her place and walked over to the fire and came back again. "Italia! 't is my belief the girl has bewitched you all, with her baby face and those great eyes of hers. I spend my life, I make a slave of myself, for you and the child, and for what good? Why, even the child, even Palmira, it's little enough she troubles her head about me if she can get Italia to do so much as look at her. Italia! I don't say she is not a good girl—"

"Mother!"

"I tell you—Dino, I will not have you looking at me in that way. I will not have it. I am not saying anything against Italia, I tell you. I have not waited until now to have my own son teach me how to know a good girl

when I see one, though, mind you, there's many a lass will sweep out the corners of the balcony while she's waiting to be married, and when she's got a husband—you'll not find her so much as wiping the dust off her own plate. Not that I am saying that Italia is of that sort. She is a good girl."

"Yes," said Dino, lifting up his face. And then, as if there had indeed been some spell of comfort and of healing in the very sound of her name, he rose with a new look of light and gladness in his young eyes.

"Mother, dear." He stood looking down upon her bowed gray head for a moment, and stooped and kissed it. "I will go for Palmira first. But I will come back as soon as I can," he said simply. "Poor mother! it is hard for you I know. What you wanted to make you happy was a very different sort of son,—the kind of fellow who never troubled his head about other people's doings, and who would have found out long ago how to get on with Sor Checco—confound him! Poor little mother. But we must even make the best of what we have. And you will see it will not turn out so badly as you fear. Come, mother, dear, look up before I go, and let me see that you are not angry;" he slipped his arm about her neck, forcing her to raise her head and look at him.

But although she yielded to the caress — “I am not like you ; I cannot change as the wind blows. When I mean a thing I mean it,” she said, sadly enough. And long after he had gone she sat still, as he had left her, gazing fixedly at the closed door. That door ! how much of her life had she not seen pass through it, not to return, since the time when the years seemed long before her and she had found her chief pride, her chief plaything, in her handsome boy ! Now, it was as if with every month that passed he were going more and more away from her, as the likeness to his dead father deepened. And the knowledge of this was like the painful pressure of a heavy hand upon her bruised mother’s heart.

Disappointment, discouragement, and the rebellion against that discouragement, and all the weariness of a hard strenuous nature, for ever struggling, and for ever thrust back upon itself, were expressed in every line of her worn yet insistent face. She sat thus for what seemed to her a long space of time before she roused herself to take up her work. But before she did so she blew out both the candles. “He likes plenty of light. They will do for him when he comes back. His eyes are young still, let him save ‘em while he can,” she said half aloud, bending her own gray head still lower over her

work as she knitted on and on in the darkened room. She let the fire go down to its lowest ember; what was the good of wasting warmth if Dino was not there to enjoy it? But, indeed, she was scarcely aware of the increasing cold, her mind was already so full of new plans for the future,—projects in which she unconsciously disposed of the future action of her son as confidently as if he were still the little child she remembered, her docile bright-eyed boy, knowing no other law but the imperious rule of her anxious and exacting love.

## CHAPTER II.

### FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

As he reached the quay, and even before he was so near it, from the steps above, looking across from the bridge, Dino could see the light shining like a welcome behind the curtained window of old Drea's house. The wind had fallen a little, but not the sea. The flight of stone stairs leading down to the landing from the level of the street was wet and slippery with the salt spray ; even here, in the shelter of the Old Port, the black water was tossing and heaving in the light of the rising moon. There was a continual movement, a backward and forward swaying, among the ships at anchor ; a shifting of the level of the signal lights.

As he came nearer Dino could see that the friendly scarlet curtain had a great rent across the middle of it ; he halted by the window, looking in with smiling eyes at the little group by the fireside. A young girl was sitting on a low stool beside the fire, with her back to the window ; she was talking to a child who knelt

beside her and was looking up intently in her face. The young man could not see that face, which was turned away from him, but only the outline of the dear round head, with its heavy dark twist of hair ; he could not hear what she was saying ; he could only watch the quick motion of her little brown hands. She appeared to be telling some story, which the child was listening to with bated breath. All about them were scattered books and pieces of paper ; there was a guitar, an open inkstand, upon a neighboring chair. "Ah, the idle child ! the idle little girl !" the young man said to himself with a half tender laugh, looking at those fallen papers upon the floor. And then he rapped once, twice, upon the window.

Italia sprang to her feet at the sound. "Dino ! it is Dino !" she cried joyfully, and flew to the door to meet him, with two little outstretched hands, and welcome beaming in her eyes. She led him in, away from the wind and cold and darkness. "Father is coming, and we have been expecting you, oh, for hours. I know it has been such a hard day for you, you poor, poor Dino," she said, in that sweet low voice of hers, which seemed made only to express the pity and goodness and loving-kindness of her gentle heart. She did not let go his hand : to the young man's fancy it was as if all the new light and warmth about him

were radiating only from her look. As he gazed at her it seemed to him that he had never fairly seen her before: when she turned away again, blushing, he started as if he were awaking from a dream.

"We were speaking of interesting things. Italia was telling me a story. It was a fairy story — out of a book — but now you have come in and interrupted it," observed little Palmira quietly, looking gravely up at both of them from where she still knelt upon the floor.

"But hush, you bad child. Why, Mira, surely you would not have our Dino think we are not glad to see him? And if we talk about fairies do you think our hard taskmaster will not begin to ask us about our lessons?" said Italia laughing, and still with that softest rosy flush upon her cheek. "There! that is what we have done for you, signor Dino," as she pointed to the scattered papers upon the floor. "It was I who threw them down there, because — oh, because I had not done one of them. And I hate learning to write, it hurts my fingers; and then I can't hold my guitar. And this is my birthday, and Lucia is coming to supper with us — father has just gone over to fetch her; and see, I have put on the new dress she made for me; do you like it? But Lucia will scold me. I have not mended the hole in the curtain, and I tore it a week ago," cried the girl with another laugh.

"'T is a pretty dress. Have I never seen you in it before? but you always look the same in my eyes, and whatever I see you wear is what I like the best," Dino answered, looking at her fondly. He put out his hand and touched the sleeve of her cotton frock. "You will wear this the day we go to Monte Nero—"

"For the pilgrimage? ah, yes. And this year we must take poor Lucia with us. And the Sora Catarina; — it would not be like Monte Nero if you and your mother were not with us. Do you remember the first time we went there together, Dino? I was twelve years old."

"And you carried your doll into the church for the benediction; I remember—"

"Ah, but it was a very pretty doll. It was the old Marchesa gave it to me, one day your mother had taken me with her to the palazzo. I remember it so well: I had never been in such a big room before, and when Sora Catarina left me alone I was frightened, and I cried. And then the Marchesa herself came in and spoke to me. She had a long train to her gown that rustled, and it had gold things on it, like the dress of the Madonna. And when she dropped her handkerchief I picked it up for her. It was fine, oh, so fine! and white, like a cobweb, and it smelt of flowers."

"Why did she not give you that instead of a doll? I would not have taken the doll. I des-

pise dolls," said Palmira, lifting up her little pale face again from her book.

"As if I had ever been as wise as you, you little monkey. Oh, Dino, I know I have been very idle all the week. And it seems so ungrateful to you after all your trouble. But I can't write, I really can't. I am like father, all my fingers are thumbs," said Italia mournfully, shaking her head and looking down on her lap at her little sunburned hands. "But you are not vexed with me? really not? I did not *mean* to disappoint you, Dino."

"No, dear; I am sure of that. But now let us see these famous exercises. Perhaps they are not quite so bad."

She gathered up all the books and brought them to him instantly, standing beside him with perfect docility as he turned over the blotted pages. "Of course you write so beautifully yourself," she said. And at that young De Rossi gave a sudden start. "Indeed I had forgotten. When I am with you I can think of nothing else. But, Italia, there was something — I knew there was something I wanted to tell you — and, what will Sor Andrea say? For I have left the office."

"Oh, Dino!"

"Not that I mind *that* so particularly; but what will your father say? I came down to consult with him about it. I —"

"There he is!" said Italia, quickly turning her head at the sound of a heavy step, and adding hastily: "Do tell him, Dino — tell him everything; you know how good he is," — she sprang to open the door.

The first person to enter, blown into the room, as it seemed, by a stronger gust of wind, was a small, thin woman of about forty or forty-five. Her face and shoulders were closely muffled in a woollen shawl, which Italia promptly removed and threw into a corner.

"Dear Lucia, how good of you to come to us on such a horrible night — "

"If you would not mind — if you will give it to me I will fold it up properly; things get so easily worn," the new-comer murmured, looking apologetically at them all. And then she put up both her hands, — the thin, white hands of a sewing woman, — and patted the bands of her shining black hair; her dress, too, was black, and scrupulously neat, with many shining beads and buttons upon it.

"I am so glad to see you," Italia repeated, looking down at the little woman with an indescribable friendliness and compassion in her own kind eyes.

"Ay, it was rough work getting here for the poor little woman. I left her for half a minute while I stopped to look at the boat, and *per*

*Bacco!* she came in ahead of me in the race. I could not find her out there in the dark; I thought she had been blown clean away, I did," observed Sor Drea with a loud, good-natured laugh. He fastened the door and came up slowly to the fireside,—a short, strongly-built figure, with a decided lurch in his walk. He came up and laid his hand upon Italia's shoulder. "Well, my little girl? Ah! this now is what I like," the old man said, glancing over with a broad, cordial smile at Dino; "this is the sort of thing that does a man's heart good, to come in and find supper ready, and a good fire, and all the old faces. Who wants to eat alone? Alone? Why, one isn't comfortable alone even in Paradise; one needs an angel or two if it was only just for company. The blessed saints, they know better than to live separate, they do."

"How do you know, father?" asked Italia, with a laugh.

"Perhaps I've met them. Perhaps I've had an angel or two to live with—there's no telling," said her father looking down at her fondly. "Ask the youngster over there. Why, Lord bless you, my girl, when I was his age—But there, there, a sound man is a young man, and the only old men are the dead ones. What's the matter with the lad? What ails

you, boy? Surely no one here can have been vexing you? You can't have been quarrelling with my little girl?" But at that —

"Quarrelling with Italia!" and "Father!" they both protested in one breath.

Old Drea laughed good-humoredly. "Well, well; 'tis a young sailor who does not keep ready for a change in the fairest wind. There's no such great harm in a friendly bit of a quarrel. And, bless you, lad! you and the girl there are too like brother and sister not to have found that out long before. There's no such great harm done, I tell you. Women, they are like caterpillars; they curl up if you do but touch them, but they go creeping on."

Italia and De Rossi exchanged glances. "Father," the young girl began; she hesitated for a moment. "Father!" She went up to him and took one of his hard and knotted hands into both of her own, looking up into his face with the sweetest look of entreaty. "Indeed you are always right, dear, and our poor Dino *is* in trouble," she said simply. "He has left — he has been sent away from his office, and he has come to his oldest friends. You are not going to be angry with him, father?" Her sweet eyes were full of tears.

"The fact is, there has been a row about a demonstration. I don't know if you heard about

it. It was last month, when they were enlisting the new recruits. And some of the republican clubs got up a counter procession and marched down the Via Grande with flags, and cheered Garibaldi. And then there had been a skirmish with the police—nothing very serious, but still—It was a foolish business altogether,” the young man confessed, hanging his head.

“ Foolish? By——I call it by another name than foolish!” the other man broke out with sudden passion. “Nonsense, Italia; let me speak. What does a woman know about such matters? I tell you it was a piece of rank mutiny aboard ship. You ought to have been clapped into irons, every man of you; and so you would have been if I’d had aught to do with you. So you would have been. What, sir; do you mean to tell me that you—you, a lad I’ve known, ay, and been fond of too, since you were a little chap as high as my knee,—do you mean to tell me, Dino, that *you’ve* been and joined a company of shouting fools with nothing better to do than insult the Government that pays and keeps ‘em?”

“ If the Government paid me the Government got my work in return,” says the young man, turning very red; “and I was not the only one. I was only carrying out my club’s orders.”

“ Then I say, damn your club, sir!”

"Father!"

"Gesu Maria! Gesu Maria! ah, those men!" sighed Lucia under her breath, and grasped Palmira's shoulder convulsively. The child shook herself free with a contemptuous movement. "Let me be. What are you afraid of? Look at Italia," she said quietly, turning her small pale face and great eyes full upon the young girl. De Rossi, too, had turned towards her.

"Perhaps I'd better go now, sir. I am sorry I came in. I am sorry I troubled you," he began in a formal voice. "I ought, I suppose, to apologize —"

"Oh, damn your apologies!" said Sor Drea, starting up to his feet again, and taking a hasty turn across the room. "Be a man, can't you? What is the use of apologizing — of — of apologizing, *per Bacco!* for what you are perfectly ready to do again — for what you mean to do again? Apologies! — yes — they're cheap enough in every market; — a good wind to torn sails. I believe in actions myself; in doing your duty by your masters and betters, and not hurting the people who love you, — not in fine gentlemen apologies — damn 'em," said the old man, bringing his knotted hand down heavily upon the table, and glaring from under his shaggy eyebrows at Dino with an unspoken world of troubled reproach in his keen old eyes.

There was a moment of silence, and then, "Father, dear?" said Italia beseechingly, going up to him and slipping her arm about his neck.

"Ay, ay, my little girl. You're a good girl, I know it. A good girl, though I say it as should n't. But not even you—you can't think I am going to put up with this sort of nonsense from a youngster like that, a fellow who comes to talk to me of—"

"Who comes to ask advice of his oldest friends. And in your own house, father."

"Oh, Lord help us!" said old Drea with a groan.

"And if you knew the whole of the story as I know it—I mean why it is that he has lost his place to-day. Stop, Dino. I know it is a secret, but I think it is a secret which I ought to tell my father. If you knew why he was sent away," said Italia, in her sweet low voice, looking with beaming eyes full of affection from one man to the other. "It is quite true what Dino told you about the procession, father, but there is more than that. There was another man in Dino's office who joined in the procession too. And they could not find out who it was, and they wanted Dino to tell them his name. And he would not. And that is why he had to leave."

"There, there. Say no more, child, say no

more. I spoke too soon and forgot to listen. My words were like so many kittens that are born in such a hurry they're born blind. No offence, lad. There, shake hands over it. Lord bless you ; and so you would n't tell 'em that other chap's name—not to save your own place, eh ? Ay, that was right, boy, that was right. But Lord, Lord, what a chap that one must be who let you do it."

"He 's a mere boy. He does n't know any better. And it does not matter so much to me. I was not so anxious to stay—only on my mother's account," said Dino slowly.

"Ay, she 'll be fine and disappointed, she will. She takes things hard, does Sora Catarina. She always did from a girl. Have you told her yet, Dino ?"

"Yes," he said, glancing over at Italia.

"Ay, she 'll be disappointed, she will," the old man repeated slowly, wrinkling his brow, and looking at the fire, while he fumbled absently in the pocket of his pea-jacket for his pipe. "So you came and told my little girl here all about it, eh, Dino ?"

"I told Italia."

"Yes, and he told me not to repeat it to any one," added Italia quickly.

"Ay, ay. I 'll warrant you he did. Ah, he 's young yet is the lad ; he 's young," said Drea

with a quiet chuckle. "When you find a woman who keeps a secret for you, my Dino, you may rest pretty certain she's got some of her own to look after. And even then you need not think yours will last her. Ah, they're a queer-rigged craft are women, and a secret is the ballast they think first about throwing overboard if there's ever such a capful o' wind to make the sea a bit roughish. Your mother's the only sheathing in petticoats I've ever seen who can hold her tongue still between her teeth; and even she can only do it by not speaking. They're a queer-rigged craft, and no mistake, eh, Sora Lucia? is n't that your experience? You'll have a deal to do with their tempers in the way of your business, I'll be bound."

"Well, Sor Drea, it's rather like the pins and needles — there are all sorts. And it just makes the difference how much you can pay for them," said the little woman primly, smoothing down the neat cuff of her sleeve.

"Lucia likes women better than men; they walk about the room without making a noise; and they understand about trimmings," remarked Palmira, with a toss of her head.

"Eh, little one, and who asked *your* opinion? Little girls should be seen, you know, seen and not heard of — not heard of," said the old man in a voice of affected rebuke. He put out his

hand, and the child came up to him instantly, nestling against his shoulder, and rubbing her thin little cheek on the rough sleeve of his coat. "I don't mind, I'm not afraid, if you *do* make a noise," she said softly in his ear.

"Nay, nay, child. But you should mind. Little girls must mind what is going on about them, else how are they ever to learn their manners before they grow up?" said Sor Drea, still in an admonitory tone, but patting the little face near him as he spoke with a smile which the child understood better than his words. And then he looked about him, "Well, Dino—Italia, my girl!—and how about our supper? are we not ready for that birthday supper yet?" he said aloud.

Italia had moved away, and was standing beside the window. She was perfectly aware that Dino had followed her there, but some sudden new shyness kept her silent and wondering at herself. She had pushed back the scanty curtain, and stood leaning her forehead against the coolness of the window-pane. Outside all was darkness, and one heard the sound of the breaking waves. It was a rough night, she thought to herself: and tried to say it, but somehow she could not speak: the words stuck in her throat, and would not frame themselves. In that singular moment she seemed to

be leading a double life ;—the old existence was there, the old safe habit of home and her father's voice heard beside the fire ; and here—here was something different, an unknown feeling of oppression,—an anguish of self-consciousness, pierced with sudden flashes of a new unfamiliar joy. And yet this was only Dino, whom she had known all her life ; Dino, her old tyrant and protector and playfellow —

“ You are not angry now ? My father did not mean all that he said ; he did not mean to be unkind —to you,” she said abruptly, turning her face still farther away and looking out into the blackness.

There was no answer for a moment, and her heart began to beat faster.

“ It is—it is a very rough night,” she said in a still lower voice, the words forcing themselves out at last. And then she turned her head slowly towards him.

She did not lift her eyes to his face, but she was aware that he moved. He had been leaning one arm against the window-frame ; her own hands were clasped together and resting upon the ledge. She saw him move his arm, and felt the warm pressure of a strong hand laid upon both of hers. She stood quite still, breathing very softly.

“ Italia ! ”

He was gazing at her with all his soul in his eyes,— with a transfigured face which she had never seen before ; he spoke in a new voice. “ Italia ! ” Was it a prayer—a command ? The girl shivered from head to foot. She turned very pale, and then, slowly, she lifted up her glorious eyes full of a new resplendent light of joy, and they stood silent for a long, long moment, gazing at one another with the full, serious inquiring look of familiar souls new met in some strange heaven.

“ Italia ! ” said her father’s voice again, and she turned to him at once with a simultaneous movement of her whole being. These last moments were not a thing to be thought of now ; she put them entirely on one side with a feeling of definite possession ; it was something to be remembered and realized later on, when she was alone. She went up now to her father and laid her little hands upon his shoulder caressingly, with something of the sensation of having returned to him from afar. Her face was a little pale perhaps, but she smiled, and no one noticed her paleness. It is the way with the great crises of our mental experience : they pass us by in silence. Angels visit us for good or ill ; the shadows of night gather deeper, or our dawn grows red with promise,— and nothing has taken place which was noticeable even to very affectionate

eyes. It is not all insensibility in the lookers-on. At every marriage procession, as at every funeral, there *must* be some person present whose chief interest lies in the trappings,—in the workman-like manner in which the wheels go around a corner, and how the horses carry their heads. And life teaches that, as it teaches patience.

It was some time before anything more was said concerning Dino's prospects. When a man's daily food is the measure of his degree of success in the world, conversation at table means chiefly an interruption. So that it was some time before old Drea pushed away his plate and drew his glass nearer, rubbing the back of one hand across his lips with a deep-drawn breath of satisfaction, while with the other he fumbled in his pocket for his pipe. It was only a small flask of cheap thin country wine which stood upon the table before him, but he passed it over to Dino with an air of simple satisfaction and pride, a cordial and affectionate pleasure in his own hospitality, which might well have softened a harsher beverage.

"Drink, lad. Don't stint yourself. Wine was made for drinking. Lord, 'tis one more reason for not being a woman. Look at Italia there. You'd think an old sailor's daughter would know better than to care for any water that is n't salt water, eh, boy? And Sora Lucia, too,

sip, sipping, with her head on one side like a fly. But there, she is not to be laughed at, for a pluckier little woman — Lord, how she did fight that wind! You didn't well know which of you was running away with the other, eh, Lucia? Well, well, after all, a fly kicks as hard as it can — ”

“ Did Lucia kick? I should have liked to see her,” said the child Palmira, looking up. A smile like her brother’s smile lit up with a sudden brightness her pale, small face.

“ Indeed, Sor Drea was far too busy thinking of his boat; he knows nothing about what I did,” the little dressmaker retorted briskly, with a toss of her head, which made the black beads glisten. Her face, too, was warmed and dilated by the sense of plenty about her,— the wine and fire and supper. Her black eyes shone demurely, the hollow cheeks were flushed, she had lost for the moment something of her habitual air of suppression,— an air of decent disappointment with life.

The old man laughed good-humoredly. “ Hark to her — hark to the child, will you? Ay, quick and sharp, and down on you before you know where you are. She’s her mother’s own daughter — in all but looks. She was always a tall girl, was Catarina, and a step and an eye like a queen,— an eye that went through you. But

never you mind, Lucia; 'tis better to be the head of an eel than the tail of the biggest sturgeon, to my way of thinking. Ay, do your best in this world as you find it, and if any one else can do better, why, let 'em show you how 't is done. That's my way of thinking. And now —" he leaned back, thrusting both hands into his trousers' pockets and shifting his pipe to the other corner of his mouth. "And now about this business of yours, lad?"

Dino looked up with a start from his occupation of drawing patterns upon the table with a little heap of bread crumbs. "I wanted to ask your advice about that," he began doubtfully.

"Well, ask it. Advice costs no headache, boy. You may borrow another man's compass to steer by even when he can't lend you the wind. Stop a bit, though. We'll begin with the beginning, by your leave." His face, which time and exposure to the weather had so stiffened and tanned that it had grown well-nigh impossible to detect any of the slighter changes of expression upon it,—his face looked as rigid and impassive as a piece of wood. "It's really all over with you now at your office? no chance of making it up again with the masters? They would n't take you back again, eh?"

"Why, as for that," said Dino hastily, "I would not go back if they all came here together,

in a body, to ask me." He looked across the table at Italia. "I am an eel's head too, sir,—like Lucia there," he said smiling. "I've been a sturgeon's tail long enough. I'm tired of being wagged when I'd rather be quiet."

"And so you want to show your teeth, you young rascal!" called out Drea, with another great laugh, and filling up his glass. "Nay, lad, but it is a pity you were not bred for a sailor. You've a good notion of your own, too, about handling a boat. But your mother would never have heard of it, not she. Bless you! she's been up too much to the Villa to see the old Marchesa — by her leave and meaning no offence — to listen to reason. That's the way with women: they want a bit of every shining thing they see. And nothing's too good for them. It's my belief they'd use diamonds to fasten up their sleeves with if they could get at 'em, and think nothing of it."

"I know we should want to begin by fastening up yours, father," said Italia in her soft gentle way. Her glance met Dino's as she spoke, and she looked down again with smiling lips and cheeks grown suddenly red.

"Your mother was always a proud woman, always," the old man went on meditatively, staring at the blue rings of smoke curling up from his pipe. "She took life hard. And she meant

to make a gentleman of you from the first. She was proud, that is why she married your father. And she did not want you down on our level. She meant to make a gentleman of you, you see — ”

“ A fine gentleman ! ” Dino burst out eagerly. “ Sor Drea, is this fair ? Have I ever had, have I ever wanted, other friends than you ? I don’t know what you mean by talking about different levels ; but Italia knows — you ought to know — if I have ever done anything to deserve to have this said to me. Why, all the happiness I have ever had in my life I have had here,” he said, with a quick comprehensive glance around him at the old familiar walls. All the associations of his boyhood seemed lurking in those shadowy corners. “ I can understand that you are not particularly well satisfied with me now. I’m not particularly well satisfied with myself. It’s not a brilliant look-out for the future. But why should n’t I work as well as another man ? They never found any fault with my work in that infernal office. Why, even the head clerk there, Sor Checco — he hates me — if he owned a donkey he would call it Dino for the pleasure of kicking it ; but even he could never find fault. There’s plenty to be done. My mother, now, her one idea is to go up to the Villa to talk to the Marchesa — ”

"Ay, 'tis a good plan—a good plan. Look there, now! I should never have thought of that. But she has a head on her shoulders, has your mother," the old man said admiringly, clapping the palm of his hand down heavily upon the table. "Fill up, boy, fill up, and we'll drink good luck to her going. That's right and as it should be. For one works for the masters here as one prays to the saints in Heaven, and they know best what's wanted in both places. Lord bless you! if one had to stop to discuss matters with 'em, there'd be no time left to work in. That's my way of thinking. *Commanda chi pol e obidiscia chi deve.* 'T would be a poor way of travelling if all the crew wanted to steer."

"Why, as to that—" began Dino, pushing away his glass impatiently. "Look here, Sor Drea. You were speaking of my father a moment ago. I was very fond of my father—"

"Ay, lad."

"You never knew him well. You never understood him."

Old Drea took his pipe out of his mouth and looked at it carefully. "Perhaps not," he said.

"You never understood him. You thought he was aping the manners and customs of his betters, when all the while—poor father! But let that pass. He taught me one thing, at any

rate, for which I am more thankful to him every day that I live. He taught me that there are wants and wishes in a man — yes, and rights too — that are too strong to be choked off with a good dinner, and too old to be taught to drop courtesies to every fine dress and fine title they may chance to come across. I'll have nothing to do with it all, for my part, nothing. And I've told my mother so. If she chooses to depend upon the old Marchesa's protection, well and good. Perhaps it suits a woman's nature to sit through rainstorms waiting for the sun to shine. I know nothing about it. I only know it doesn't suit me. I went into that office to please my mother, and I'm ashamed of having been in there. I'm ashamed of having held my tongue for three years for the sake of wearing a black coat and having the office boy answer, 'Yes, sir!' when I told him to fetch me a glass of water. They were quite right to turn me out for taking part in that demonstration : it was a foolish thing in itself, but what it meant was n't foolish. And it meant more than they knew. As for myself," the young man added vehemently, with a sudden flush all over his pale dark face, "I agree with my father. If I had the power, I would make every title in Europe a thing to put into a museum, along with the other dead things in the dust. I am a Republican."

He looked straight across the table at Sor Drea.  
“I am a red Republican,” he repeated.

“Ah!” said Italia quickly, and turning, laid her hand in mute appeal upon her father’s arm.

But he only patted the little hand kindly, looking back at Dino with more of amusement than surprise in his keen old eyes. “Ay, lad. We’ve all been young in our time,” he said simply. “Things never struck me in that fashion; but there! it’s all a matter of chance, like having the fever. Perhaps if they’d fastened me up in a black coat and tied me by the leg to a desk when I was a youngster like you, things ’ud have seemed different to me. I might have been longer finding out for myself that the sun goes on shining just the same if you keep your own umbrella shut or open. The good God lets us do, but he doesn’t let us overdo. Mind that. There’s things that are settled for us; settled before we were born; but it takes a baby a good while to make quite sure that the walls of the house can’t be got to move by its pushing at ‘em.

— That’s one way I used to keep my little girl there quiet when she was a mite of a thing, so high, when she used to cry to come and sit beside me in the boat while I was cleaning the fish, and believed she was making the water rock her by shaking the rudder with her soft little fingers. Ay, so she did — so she did.”

He puffed slowly away at his pipe as if he had finished speaking. But when Dino leaned forward as if about to reply, the old man checked him with a warning movement of his finger. He was evidently ruminating some plan, for presently he added :—

"I'm not blaming you for what you've done, lad ; though, Lord, Lord, what a chap the one must be who let you do it ! But there—it takes all sorts of days to make up one week. And I'm not saying you are not as well out o' that place as in it. There are some men that it's cheaper to lose 'em than to find 'em ; ay, and places too. The bread of service is baked with seven crusts ;—it's not suited to every man's stomach. Look, my Dino," the old man added slowly. "We are all friends here, Lucia and all of us. And I've known you, man and boy, since you and the child there used to play i' the old boat together. I never had a son of my own, but if I had had there 'ud be two of us to keep, and two of us to look after the little girl ; that 'ud be all the difference. And if you're minded, now you're out of other work, if you're minded to come and have a try at it, lad, why, there's my hand on it. There's plenty wouldn't let another man set his foot in their boat unless they could clap a plaster o' stamped paper on the spot he first stepped on ; but that's not my way o' think-

ing. An old ox keeps a straight furrow. We don't need 'greements, you and I. We'll just have Sora Lucia there to witness, and there's my hand on it if it pleases you to say 'Done!'"

The three silent spectators of this scene had been listening to what was said in feminine fashion, watching the faces of the two men rather than their words; and now, as they clasped hands across the supper table, Italia could no longer control her excitement. Her hands turned cold: she rose from her seat: she went up to Lucia and threw her arms about the good little woman's neck.

"There, my little girl, there. It's nothing to cry about," the old father said tenderly. He turned to Dino. "There's two of us to look after her and take care of her now."

"So help me, God, I will," the young man answered passionately. He looked at Italia full in the face.

"I am her servant. I would give my life for her, and she knows it," he said simply, with all his soul lighting up his eager eyes.

Her hand was hanging loosely by her side; he took the little hand in his and looked at it for an instant, and raised it to his lips and kissed it.

"I am her servant, if she will have me," he said.

Before any one had time to answer there came a loud sharp knock at the outer door.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE YOUNG MASTER.

THE young man who entered, not waiting to have his knock answered, but throwing the door wide open before him with an easy air of good-natured authority,—this new-comer, was dressed in the uniform of an officer of the King's Guards. As he came into the low smoke-embrowned room he was at once the brightest object there ; the fire-light caught and flashed upon all manner of resplendent buttons and knots and gold lacings, and on the shining hilt of his sword. His long, glittering spurs rang sharply against the bare stone floor. “It is the Prince out of the fairy tale, Italia ; the fairy Prince,” said little Palmira breathlessly, and stared with her great brown eyes, clutching at Italia’s hand.

“The Marchese Gasparo! the young master!” old Drea cried out in a loud voice, pulling off his round woollen cap.

They all stood up, even Dino, who strolled away a few steps from the table to the fireplace, where he began fingering a small dusty model

of a boat: it had stood in that same place, between two handfuls of shells, as far back as he could remember anything.

"I only came home to-day. I've lost no time in looking you up, old Drea. My mother was not expecting me back so soon, and half the rooms are shut up at the Villa,—the house is as musty as a tomb. It was so dull I couldn't stay in after dinner," the young Marchese said, with a quick, comprehensive glance at the two women present. His open face grew still more frankly bright at the sight of Italia; he took a step forward and doffed his cap, and made her a profound and smiling bow.

"And this is my little playmate, then; *this* is the little girl who used to go out with us in the old boat while Drea was teaching me to fish," he said, looking at her hard.

"Ay, she's grown, she's grown, my little girl has. Per Bacco! it's six years now, or more, since you have seen her; it's no wonder if you find her changed, signor Marchese."

"I find her—changed!" the young man echoed, smiling. The tone of his voice was a *résumé* of all unspoken compliments. There could be no doubt of what he thought of this alteration; and Dino, by the fireplace, looked around with a sudden sharp pang of jealousy and wonder.

He had not spoken, but no movement seemed to escape the soldier's quick keen glance.

"What! Dino?—Dino de' Rossi? Why, man, what is the matter with you? You look like a thunder-cloud. Aren't you glad to see me home again, then?" the young Marquis asked laughingly, and was pleased to hold out his hand to his old acquaintance and foster-brother, bidding him cheer up and not stand there sulking, "if it were only out of respect to the signorina's beautiful eyes."

"Nay, she is no signorina; her name is Italia, at the signor Marchese's service," old Drea interposed, gravely enough. Young men would be young men; but it would be well if the Marchese Gasparo should recollect the difference, and to be spoken of in this way by one of the "padroni" brought with it an uneasy sense of incongruity: it was like one of the gods walking upon the earth and claiming human familiarity. Old Drea probably cared more about pleasing his young master than for any other thing in the world unconnected with Italia. He was very susceptible to the influences of education and rank. "Ay, there are differences between us workingmen just as there are differences between the donkeys; but your cleverest donkey will only think of seven tricks, while his master can think of eight," he had said to Dino

only a day or two before ; and the fact that “the masters” knew best was a quite unquestioned source of comfort and satisfaction to the loyal, simple-hearted old man. All genuine reverence implies a certain poetry of nature ; there was a good deal of romantic admiration — the old feeling of the clansman to his chief — mixed up with the affection and respect with which he contemplated his young guest. And Gasparo was well aware of the fact. He liked the old man, too, in his way ; above all, he liked to be liked. All pleasant sensations were natural to him, and the simple admiration which surrounded him now was warm and agreeable, like the sunshine. Things had not been made quite so pleasant to him at the Villa. He had found the household unprepared to receive him, the house in disorder, and the old Marchesa, his mother, more grimly logical than complaisant on the subject of his gambling debts. But here, at least, there was no fear of encountering irritating criticism. He was always ready to do a good-natured thing *en bon prince*; and now, as he took a seat beside the table — it was Drea’s chair — and let the old man fill him up a glass of the sour wine, it was impossible altogether to resist the charm and gayety of his manner. There was something satisfactory and winning in the very tones of his voice, in the glance of

his quick smiling eyes, in the firm, ready pressure of his hand. When he asked Italia to sing him a song, which he did presently, it was with the air of pleading for some favor.

"The child's ready enough to sing; and proud enough she ought to be to think you should have remembered her voice all these years. But she was always like a little singing bird, when she was no higher than my knee. Lord! how well I can remember it,—taking her out with me in the old boat, and she, no bigger than that, sitting on the nets and singing away to herself, soft like, till you could think of nothing else but a summer morning, when the boat is anchored off shore, and the larks are just rising in the meadows. But there! 't is I am keeping the Captain from his music after all," old Drea said, with an apologetic laugh.

Italia had taken her guitar from Dino's hands; she took it with a smile and a blush, as she had taken the Captain's pretty speeches, and moved away to the other end of the room. Her voice was the lowest, sweetest contralto. When she began to sing, her face grew serious and composed.

"Why does Italia look so unhappy as that? She looks like one of the saints on the cathedral window, as if she were saying her prayers," Palmira whispered into Lucia's ear. She was awe-

struck with admiration of the Captain's sword, which he had taken off before sitting down at the table. "Do you think, Lucia,—do you think he would let me touch it if Italia were to ask him?" she said.

The Captain did not seem in the humor to object to anything. The song—or was it the singer?—had given him far more pleasure than he had expected. He told her so, after a moment's hesitation.

"Indeed, I am very glad, sir. I shall be very glad to sing for you as much as you like, and father pleases," Italia answered, looking at him with a great deal of kindness and pleasure. Indeed, every instinct of her nature was always prompting her to do some kindness to some one. As she sat there on her low seat, bending over her guitar, the firelight shining full upon her small, dark head and flushed cheeks, and on the movement of her little, brown wrists, Dino could not turn his gaze away from her. Another man's admiration is a background against which many an ordinary woman has shone clad in unaccustomed graces to her lover's eyes. But in this case Dino wanted no confirming in his devotion: it was only that seeing her there, listening to another man's compliments, had given a slight shock to the sense of unquestioning security which had grown up with him since the

very first earliest days of his love. Already he began to look back with some jealous uneasiness at the past years when Italia had seemed as much his, and as much a necessity of his being as the breath he drew. True, he had never spoken to her about it, at least not in so many definite words ; that was partly because she was still so young,—only eighteen on this birthday, — and partly too that there had seemed no need for vexing his mother beforehand : he had not money enough to marry upon as yet, and his mother was sure to object ; she had always discouraged his being so much at Drea's. But now all these considerations seemed to go for nothing, to become futile and irrelevant seen in the light of this new possibility that another man could step in and attempt to carry away his own especial treasure from before his very eyes. Dino had but little of old Andrea's capacity for personal reverence ; there was not enough modesty in his own nature for that ; so that it did not strike him as so utterly preposterous that a man in the young Marchese's position should fall seriously in love with a fisherman's daughter. On the other hand, there was always a certain doubt lurking at the bottom of his strongest assertions of equality. He had no weight of simple conviction to steady his possession of the theories which attracted him the most. There

was always a struggle between his intelligence and his instincts. Things outside and away from his creed of conduct appealed to him. He could not take life simply: there was the exaggeration of effort in his innermost beliefs. He looked at Italia: he looked with almost more than a woman's sensitiveness to material impressions at the gallant and determined bearing of the man beside her, whose frank and noble beauty was only like an additional distinction,—an emphasis of class differences. No devout believer in the divinest rights of kings could have recognized those differences more keenly than Dino did at that moment. For there is nothing ambiguous in the secret language of jealousy: "And they say—*we* say—that one man is as good as another without regard to his rank! I was a fool—a fool," De Rossi reflected bitterly.

Gasparo seemed to have a talent for seeing everything. He took his cigarette case out of his pocket and asked old Drea for a light; then he said: "There *are* changes. Why, even the old gardens up there at the Villa seem to have grown smaller. I remember I thought there was no end to them when I was a boy."

"Ay, there's something in a place, but there's more in the eye that looks at it. And you'll have seen a many fine places since then,

sir, and a many fine people, I'll warrant. It's only the little people and the little places in life that don't change much ; they're away down at the bottom, in the still water, out o' reach o' the tide. You'll not find much change in us, sir. There's not a question if we're proud and glad to see you back."

"Oh, if there's any change among you it's not of the kind I'm finding fault with," the young man said, glancing again at Italia ; "only it makes one feel how much time has passed. Why, you must be getting an old man now yourself, Drea — beginning to think about giving up work and settling down for a bit — while you look out for a husband for Italia. You'll need to find a good fellow. But perhaps you have done that already."

"Nay, as for that, — the little girl can wait for a bit, — she can wait a bit yet," her father answered slowly, taking his pipe out of his mouth and knocking the ashes on the table. "Our girls are not like the young ladies you're accustomed to, sir, — with nothing to do but sit in their chairs while they pick and choose. Gentlefolks — Lord bless you ! they've got one paradise here on earth, and, as for the other one, they've got plenty o' money to spend in masses, — they've only got to pay for it. But with us 't is different, you see." He took up his glass

of wine, looked at it thoughtfully for a moment, and then emptied its contents down his throat with a sudden jerk of his wrist. "And I'd never be one to urge a girl to jump at the first comer," he said cheerfully, leaning across the narrow table to emphasize his remark. "No, no, patience never spoilt any man's luck. And the biggest fish; they're often nearest the bottom,—they're nearest the bottom, eh, Sora Lucia?"

"Gesu Maria! how should *I* know?" the little woman murmured hurriedly, with an apologetic look at the young Marchese. "In my time we did not think these things should be discussed before young—young persons," she said primly; it would have seemed a familiarity to her if she had used a common expression such as, "before young girls."

"Nay, nay, Lucia *mia*, you won't make us swallow that!" retorted Sor Drea, with another chuckle of supreme good-humor. "You won't make us swallow it, my dear. For you'll sooner find an old man without an ache than a young girl without a lover,—eh, signor Marchese? 'T is the good Lord who made us all, who chose to make us in that way, and where's the harm in speaking of it?" He filled his glass up with a more unsteady hand. "There's Dino over there looking at me like a black thunder-cloud,

—but I suppose I may say what I like about my own daughter in my own house,—eh, boy?"

"I was not contradicting you, Sor Drea," the young man answered quietly.

"Nay, lad, nay, I meant no malice. But it's a poor sort of business to waste your breath whistling for yesterday's breeze. Cheer up, lad! There's always plenty o' good work to the fore when a man's ready to do it. Ready and cheery,—even the dog can earn his dinner by wagging his tail."

Gasparo laughed. "Well, I must be going," he said, and stood up and put out his hand for his belt and sword. As he was buckling it about him his eye fell upon Palmira's pale intent little face. He sat down again.

"Come here, child," he said, and held out his hand.

"Go to the gentleman, Palmira. Go and tell him what your name is, like a good little girl, and don't be frightened," said Lucia hastily, with a general tug at the child's frock.

Palmira looked at her with flashing eyes. "I am not frightened," she said indignantly, and went and stood composedly beside Gasparo's knee.

When he asked, "Shall I show you my sword?" her eyes flashed again. She held her breath, and the color rose in her thin little cheeks.

"May I touch it?" she asked, and drew one small forefinger carefully across the shining blade. After a moment's consideration, "Have you killed many giants with it?" she said; "you know — like the fairy Prince."

"Ay, hark to that, will you? there's a brave little girl for you!" said old Drea with an inward chuckle, and an irrepressible wink at Dino. "She'd kill giants, would she? It's her mother all over."

Gasparo laughed again. "And what do you know about the fairy Prince?"

"Italia told me. He wore shining clothes, and a sword, and he carried away the Princess from the enchanted tower. And he was beautiful to look at, — like you, Italia said —"

"Palmira!"

"Look here, my small friend, — oh, your name is Palmira, is it? Very well, then; look here, Palmira. Did nobody ever explain to you that one is not allowed in this world to repeat what other people say until one is old enough to know better? No? Well, then, remember that. No girl is ever allowed to have her own way until she is old enough to do mischief. And now, look here." He drew a ring off his finger, a plain band of gold set with a large turquoise. "Do you think that is pretty?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very pretty?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, — under the circumstances, — do you think if we asked Sor Drea, you and I, to let us give it to Italia, because it is her birthday, and because I have not brought her any other present, do you think he would let us do it, Palmira? Here, take the ring and ask him."

Italia put down her guitar and stood up. She gave one rapid glance at Dino, and turned very pale. "The Signor Marchese is too kind, father. Indeed, I do not want the ring. It is — it is too beautiful for me. I should lose it."

"Nay," said Drea simply, "since the Signor Marchese wishes to give it to you, child —" He turned the bauble over curiously upon the curved and hardened palm of his hand. "Craving your pardon, Signor Gasparo, but is it gold?"

Gasparo put his hand up to his mouth and twisted his moustache to conceal a smile. "Certainly," he said.

"Real gold? *Diamine!* it is not often that I've handled it. And that little blue thing there in the middle, has that got a name of its own?"

"'T is a turquoise. They are said to bring good luck and happiness," the young man said carelessly enough. And then he looked with a certain reproach at Italia. "If I had known I

might have found you something that would have pleased you better—”

“ No one ever made me a present before. I — Father knows that I am not used to them,” the girl said shyly. She took Palmira’s hand in hers, and began stroking the little fingers.

“ Nay, take it, my little girl, take it. And put it away in some safe place. Keep it to be married with. ’T will be so much money saved when we come to think of your wedding. And ’t will be a fine thing to remember — when you’ve got children of your own—that you were married with a gold ring off our young master’s own finger. It was very kind of you to think of it, sir ; it’s not every one would ha’ thought of anything so kind. You must excuse my little girl if she didn’t seem to thank you properly. It’s only that she is not used to being made so much of ; it’s not that she’s ungrateful or lacking in her duty.”

He spoke with a simple earnestness which was not devoid of dignity.

“ I like old Drea. He’s such a good old boy. There’s not a more honest old fellow in Leghorn,” Gasparo said cordially, a few moments later, as the two young men came out into the cold night air together. “ The devil take that wind if it is not beginning to blow a *libeccio* ! That child will be blown over the steps if you don’t look

after her. Been out in Drea's boat much this winter, Dino?"

"No, sir."

"Too rough, eh? Yet I remember you used to beat me at managing a boat when we were little chaps together. *Che diavolo!* how time flies! It seems only yesterday — until one looks at that girl in there. There's a beauty if you like. What eyes! and did you ever notice how she smiles with 'em?"

Palmira felt her brother's fingers closing with a sudden thrill upon her own. He did not answer for nearly a minute. "If you are speaking of Italia, sir —"

Gasparo burst into a wild laugh. "Oh, no! How could you think it? I was speaking of the other woman, of course. Maria — Lucia — what's her name? Your little dressmaking friend with the beads. How she did look at me, *per Bacco!* you would have thought I was in league with the very devil himself."

"The women are not accustomed to your manner, sir. You must be indulgent enough to make allowances for our ignorance. No doubt, when they have found out how much your kind interest is worth —"

"Look here, my good fellow. You're my foster-brother and all that. And my mother is very fond of yours, — by the way, you must tell

Sora Catarina to come up and see me at the Villa. But as for noticing anything which you may choose to say, — why, my good Dino, you are really asking too much of me ! There ! Don't lose your temper — and don't swear. It's not the child's fault ; is it, my dear ? And so good-night to you, little one ; and here's something to buy yourself sugar-plums with. Good-night ! *Au revoir*, friend Dino ! ”

He turned abruptly on his heel and strode off down the street without waiting for an answer, the wild stormy moonlight shining full upon his handsome face. He walked on, humming an air from the new opera, and then, “ Poor devil ! ” he said aloud, and smiled with an easy insolent amusement.

Before her brother could speak, Palmira had flung the silver coin upon the pavement. “ I don't want it ; I won't have it,” she said passionately. “ I would not keep it, not — not if Italia told me to ! ”

She clasped both her small, cold hands about one of Dino's. “ Why did he speak like that ? and why did he laugh at you ? He is not like the fairy Prince at all ; he is like some wicked enchanter who has come to spoil everything. Oh, I liked him so ; and now I wish he had never come ! ” she said. “ Oh, Dino, I wish he had never come ! ”

And at the door of their house she still clung to her brother. "Must you go to the club to-night? Can't you wait for some other night? Won't you come upstairs with me? Must you go?" she asked wistfully.

Dino looked down at the small, earnest face and patted her cheek. "Good-night, little one. Run along upstairs. You ought to have been in bed hours ago. Do you know what time it is, and what the mother will say to you?"

"But, Dino, are you going?"

He glanced out at the dark street. "Yes."

"Dino, I want to whisper to you."

He laughed. "You little torment," he said, but he bent his head obediently.

"Dino, does Italia know about your going there, — about the club?"

She felt him give a sudden start at the question. "What do you mean?" he asked roughly.

"I know that every time you go there you come back looking so angry — oh, so angry! And mother cries while you are away. I've seen her when she thought I was asleep. And, Dino," she laid her little cheek against his, "Italia told me to take care of you. 'Take good care of Dino,' that was the last thing she said to me to-night. And I said I would. I wonder if I ought to let you go there?" the child said gravely.

"Did Italia say that?" He drew a long breath,

and then stooped down and kissed her. "There, run along now. There's a good child."

He stood waiting at the foot of the stairs till the sound of the small footsteps had stopped at an upper landing, and a shrill, childish voice was heard calling out, "I'm here. Take care of yourself, my Dino!"

Then he went out again into the street.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CIRCOLO BARSANTI.

THE wind, which blew so freshly in from sea across the open space of the parade, was moaning like a wild thing, trapped and caged, in the narrow streets behind the Duomo, towards which Dino was now taking his way, with a mind full of doubt and rage and suspicion. Italia — God bless her! — at least her last words had been of him. But to think of her now was also to remember the young Marchese's look at her, the poor child! as she took his ring; his laugh as he had turned away by the quay. The remembered sound of that laughter made Dino clench his teeth and break out into some wild, bitter imprecation. "I am like Palmira," he said to himself scoffingly. "I can't even hate him, and he knows it. I too wish he had never come back, because — because I liked him so!"

As he walked on, his mind was full of remembrances of their old days together, when he and Gasparo had been playmates, companions, and always with that difference between them.

They had quarrelled scores of times before now, and yet the old charm had never lost its power : Dino was always ready to be brought back by a look, a word, the first word of apology or regret. Regret ! was it not enough for him to feel that his dear, old comrade counted upon him, wanted him still, despite all his newer friends ? "I let him whistle me back at his good pleasure, like a woman, like a dog," he told himself moodily, and even as he said it he felt in his heart that he would let himself be called back again. Nor was he the only one : there was not one human being out of all the little circle which made up his world who did not in some degree conspire to pet and spoil the young Marchese. "I'm a hundred times cleverer than he is," Dino reflected for the hundredth time. "Ay, and better read, better educated. I can feel and understand a thousand things, books, ideas, emotions, which are so many dead letters to him. And what does it all amount to ? What good is it ? At four-and-twenty I'm dependent on old Drea's good-nature for a chance of earning my living by doing a common sailor's work, while *he*— Why, if he were to change places with me here to-night, by to-morrow he would be the most popular man in Leghorn. Fortune is as much at his beck and call as any of the rest of us. And now there's Italia — "

He thought how she too would recognize the prestige of the young soldier's successes, and in what a different spirit! How often in their long talks together had they arrived at the same conclusions, but by what divergent ways! What was careless ease in her, in Dino was pure recklessness: on the one side was the freedom of unconcern, and opposed to it the freedom of desperation. And how could it well be otherwise? He was sensitive, imaginative, unlucky. And he took life hard. He could never make her understand his view of it; it was not in her temperament to understand it. "While the sun is shining it *can't* be dark; and she lives in the sunshine—my darling!" he thought, with a sudden revulsion, a rush of tender feeling. And she had bid the child "take care of Dino." He smiled to himself as he crossed over, out of the moonlight, into the great shadow of the cathedral wall.

The *café* to which he was going, and where his club met, stood at the corner of two of the narrowest streets, a small, low room, lighted from the ceiling by a row of gas jets in the form of a cross. On three sides, against the wall, were large mirrors in tarnished frames; a narrow divan covered with faded red velvet ran all around the room, and in front of this was ranged a series of small marble-topped tables; three or

four men were seated there, drinking coffee and playing a game of dominos.

There was nothing at first sight to distinguish the place from any other establishment of the same rank and kind. It was a shabby second-rate café, of the stereotyped pattern ; and even the police did not take much interest in it, although it was true that the landlord professed republican — or at least liberal — political sentiments. But in a seaport town that was to be expected ; and if Jack ashore preferred drinking his glass of vermouth with the conviction that all men are free and equal, — so long as they can pay for what they are consuming, — why, it was not to be wondered at if the owner of a small public-house could be found to agree with him. The “Cross of Savoy” was shrewdly suspected to be the headquarters of one of the branch Societies belonging to the great net-work of the Circoli Barsanti. But then, again, these said Circoli, founded early in the ’70’s, to commémorate the name of a certain Sergeant Barsanti, accused, whether falsely or not, of having caused the death of his commanding officer during a trifling mutiny in the barracks at Padua, and himself accordingly tried and sentenced and shot, — these very Circoli, were they not existing under Government permission, if not patronage ? And if Government chose to ignore the fact that

some freak of popular opinion had made of the murdered sergeant a popular hero and martyr, with a name that was useful to conjure by,—in a word, if the authorities saw fit to connive at the existence of these breathing-holes, these safety-valves, so to speak, of the public discontent, how in the name of common-sense were the Leghorn police to be justified in interfering? And what, in direct consequence, could be more assured than the peace of mind and general prosperity and safety of Signor Prospero Neri,—respectable householder and landlord,—actually seated at one of his own tables, drinking some of his own coffee with an air of confidence in, and enjoyment of, the beverage which was more than equivalent to a testimonial?

Master Prospero's peace of mind was naturally a matter of some importance in his own estimation ; and yet—such a difference can be obtained in the final result by so small a change of the point of sight — within a few yards of his complacent head, in an inner room divided from the café proper by a swinging door, painted over with cupids and arabesques, a discussion was going on at that very moment which would have filled that worthy host with horror and dismay.

Three men were seated in that inner sanctum about a small round table ; above their heads a gas jet, turned up too high, flared unnoticed in

the draught ; there were glasses on the table before them, and a dingy carafe of water, and a pack of cards. But they had not been playing. Their attitude seemed chiefly one of expectation.

After a longer silence than had hitherto fallen upon them,—a silence during which the wind was distinctly audible, rattling at the window-shutters, and they could hear an occasional laugh and the click of glasses in the outer room,—“Who was it made the appointment with him ? Was it you, Pietro Valdez ?” asked the oldest man present. He spoke slowly, and with a strong German accent.

The man addressed looked up from his occupation of rubbing his moistened finger around the brim of his glass and thereby producing a series of minor musical notes. “Ay,” he said ; “I told him.”

And then, after a pause, “I’ll answer for the lad,” he added slowly.

“Do you mean for his coming to-night,—or altogether ?” the German asked abruptly, fixing a pair of piercing light-blue eyes upon his interlocutor.

Valdez picked up his empty glass ; looked into it ; then put it down with a sudden movement upon the table.

“I mean — altogether,” he said gravely.

The other two men exchanged glances.

"*Per Bacco!* I would n't do it! no, not for my own flesh and blood brother,—not I!" cried the third man present, bringing the open palm of his hand lightly down upon the table before him. It was noticeable that they all three moved and spoke with a certain caution and in the quietest tones possible. "*I* would not do it. I would n't answer for —"

The German checked his rising voice with a look. "I have taken note of what you are prepared to do, friend Valdez. You *are* prepared?" he added sharply, with another searching glance.

Pietro Valdez lifted his melancholy eyes from the table before him and stared the speaker straight in the face. Then his head dropped again, and he shrugged his shoulders wearily: "I am prepared — yes. But I look like joking, don't I? It is so probable that I should select this occasion for a jest!"

"I ask your pardon, Signor Valdez. I will make a note of what you have said."

"Ay, notes, notes. But *I* see nothing done," broke in little Pierantoni irrepressibly. "It is all very well to say the people can wait. *Santa Pazienza!* the people *have* waited. They are getting tired of waiting now. Once, the lower down you ground them the better they submitted. We know all that — at Naples. But it's a mistake to grind a man, or a people, down too far;

— 't is so easy to grind all the humanity out of them and leave only the beast. And some beasts have teeth, and object to being baited."

He got up and sat down again, holding his hands straight out before him and shaking his ten hooked fingers with a gesture as if he were sowing corn. "If you shoot at the Czar of all the Russias,— well, 't is a kind of logic. You pit one autocrat against the other : Death against the Imperial Will : and the best man wins. And there's no more unanswerable argument than a rifle-ball. It was our lords and masters taught us that long ago — at the Paris barricades. I say, if you shoot the Czar you prove nothing new. But to fire at a popular Prince — To take a man at the apex of his power, in the midst of his people, to teach him that there's no popularity, no moderation, no amount of good-nature, or good intentions, or good luck even, that can alter the eternal justice of things — That's not stabbing at a King : it's putting your knife into the Institution ; cutting the throat of royalty itself,— and not merely royalty as a political institution, but royalty as a symbol of social inequality. Is it vengeance? I protest that it is no more an act of vengeance than the sentence of a judge. Have we not tried them, these Kings? *Cristo Santo!* have we not tried 'em and found 'em wanting? Is it a murder? do

you call it murder when a man shoots down a bandit—an outlaw—with a price upon his head? And they *are* outlaws," he added with a short laugh. "Ay, and they wear their crowns for a purpose. 'T is a shining target at the least—"

"*Bene.*" The German contemplated him for a moment with an air of faint amusement; then rose slowly from his place at table and moved with a cat-like step towards the door. He stooped his shaggy head and looked long and deliberately through the keyhole at the various occupants of the adjoining room. "*Bene.* 'T is all safe. But eloquence like our Pierantoni's is apt to attract—crowds," he said, looking up again with a sudden peculiarly simple and artless smile.

The little Neapolitan leaned half-way across the table, his black eyes flashing. "*Per Cristo!* — you suspect some one? some — traitor?"

"Traitors? 't is a word you are fond of using, you Italians. I look at things differently. Why should we expect a new experience in life from that of other men? A man lives with his enemies; if he is lucky, he may meet with his friends." He looked at Valdez as he spoke: he was always looking at Valdez, who bore his scrutiny with the most unaffected unconcern. "As for suspecting, I suspect—every one," he said. "It is my business to suspect. And for

convenience' sake I begin with the suspicion of our worthy landlord." And, with a quick sidelong glance, he added lightly, "Valdez, you see, our friend Valdez does not answer for *him*."

"Nay," said Valdez slowly, "I say nothing for or against him. He is one of those men in whom necessity is the mother of virtue. He'll walk straight enough if you watch him carefully. He won't run off the line so long as there are no corners."

At this the German made some inarticulate sound of assent, and for a time again relapsed into silence. Finally, as some neighboring clock struck the hour of eleven, he looked up with another grunt. "This place closes in half an hour. The young man is not coming," he said.

"He will come," Valdez repeated calmly.

"*Per Bacco!* if he does n't—"

But even as Pierantoni opened his lips to speak, the gaily-painted door behind him opened quickly and softly, and was as softly shut.

"Am I late?" asked Dino, looking all about him.

There was more curiosity than excitement in the expression of his face.

"I thought you told me it was to be an especially important sort of meeting? Why, where are the others? There's no one here!" he said, in a hurried aside to Valdez as he drew up a

chair and took his place at the table beside his friend. Pierantoni's face he knew by sight already, but he gazed at the stranger present with considerable interest and wonder, noting each personal peculiarity of his appearance, his careless dress, his broad shoulders, and large very white hands ; he wore a large and valuable ring upon one of them, and there was an ugly scar, the red mark of an old wound, across his wrist. Dino could not keep his eyes from it. He had always longed to see this man. The German leaned back quietly in his chair.

"Your name is Bernardino de' Rossi. You are Livornese by birth,—twenty-four years old. You have belonged to this Society for nearly three years, having been introduced and vouched for by Signor Pietro Valdez, here present. And for the last four years—for the last five years, if I mistake not," he hesitated for an instant and appeared to consult his memory, "you have held a position in the Telegraph Office of Leghorn. I believe I am right in all these particulars?"

"Perfectly right. It is nearly five years. I was nineteen when I went into the office," said Dino promptly, though not without a little inward astonishment. What had this meeting then to do with him? and why had Valdez not spoken more clearly? But he was soon to know.

"And three weeks ago a slight disturbance —

a regretable disturbance—connected with a small demonstration in favor of General Garibaldi, took place. The procession was dispersed by the police, but not before you had been recognized as being implicated in it. In consequence of this, and partly, also, because of your refusing to give up the name of one of your fellow-clerks who was known to have been there with you, you were unfortunately dismissed from your post this morning. I say unfortunately because, for some few weeks at all events, you will now be placed under police surveillance. You should have been more careful, sir!" the speaker concluded brusquely.

This man had the power of assuming at will an indescribable air of ease and authority. All traces of his former manner of lounging good-nature had vanished. His voice even was changed. He spoke now with the clearness and rapidity of a man accustomed to undisputed command. "You should have been more careful, sir. You have lessened your chance of being useful."

Dino felt himself going red and white by turns.

"There was no other choice, your — your — sir! I mean," he said after a moment. "The man you speak of — he's no friend of mine — depended upon my holding my tongue. I was bound as a gentleman not to betray him."

"The Society has nothing to do with your being, or not being, a gentleman, sir!" the great man interrupted sharply, and looking at Dino with not unkindly eyes. "You will attend to what I say, if you please, as at present you are merely wasting my time in this matter." He glanced across at Valdez, and then tapped the table before him thoughtfully with his finger-tips: it was the hand on which he wore his great signet ring, and the brilliants which surrounded it glittered oddly enough among the heaps of tobacco ash and burnt-out matches which littered the mean little table.

"H'm," he said thoughtfully; and turning his eyes abruptly upon De Rossi, "You know who I am?" he demanded. "Ah—I see you do. Well, that simplifies matters. You will understand how it is that I am giving you these orders. I suppose there is no need of my reminding you of the new—the special engagements you entered into on the day following the little *émeute* we have spoken of—?"

"Ah!" said Dino, suddenly straightening himself upon his chair.

Valdez lifted his eyes quickly, then let them drop again. The lad was beginning to understand.

"You and one other man placed yourselves on that occasion on the Society's list of volunteers.

I don't know how much you meant by doing so, but that's not my affair. You would not have been accepted if you had not been considered a fit person—and properly vouched for. It seemed hardly probable at the time that any very especial service would be demanded from you, but of course you took your chance of that. I have known men wait for years and years without getting such a chance; but you are to be congratulated, young man, you are more fortunate than they."

There was a dingy carafe standing in its little saucer on the centre of the table. Dino reached over and poured himself out a glass of water; he swallowed it down at a gulp. Then he leaned deliberately back in his chair. He had turned very pale, and his eyes were shining.

"What is there to be done, sir? I'm ready," he said quietly.

The German looked at him grimly enough for a moment, and then for the first time his face relaxed into its wonderful child-like smile.

"*Schön*," he said approvingly. Then, with a sudden reassumption of his former manner, "Have you any present means of support? What are you going to do with yourself at once?" he demanded.

Dino told him.

"Very well then. For the next fortnight you will go about your work in the boats, and you

will be careful to give cause of suspicion to no one. You observe that I say *to no one*. If you have a — a *mädchen* whom you fancy yourself in love with, you will remember that the Society does not admit of rivals. At the end of the fortnight you will be sent to Rome, means being provided for your journey. And in the meantime you will not show yourself again at this club. Whatever orders you may need will reach you through Signor Valdez."

There was a moment's pause. "And — and what am I to do in Rome when I get there?" Dino asked presently. His lips had turned dry again: he found a certain difficulty in speaking.

" You will leave Leghorn on the 11th or 12th of next month. On the 13th of April His Majesty, King Humbert, will hold a grand review of his troops in the new quarter of the Macao, near the railway station. The Queen will be present at the ceremony with the court and the young Prince. The King will appear riding at the head of his staff. You will take up your place in the crowd at the corner nearest the Royal carriages. His Majesty will pass you twice — coming and going; the second time he passes — "

They had all drawn nearer the small table as he went on speaking in lower and lower tones; and now the four faces were very close together.

"And then?" Dino tried to say, but his lips only moved. He had no voice in which to frame the words.

"Signor Valdez is nearest to you. Tell him, Valdez," the German said peremptorily, and threw himself back in his chair.

And then Dino felt Valdez's warm breath in his ear. He heard certain words which, for a moment, seemed to convey no meaning. He looked straight across the room at the foolish painted door through which he had entered. He felt thirsty again—that intolerable thirst! and the gas flickered and made a curious sound — like a whistle ; and — and —

He stood up suddenly in his place, and stared at the three impassive faces before him. They were all watching him.

"My God!" he said in a broken whisper ; "great God! *you want me to assassinate the King!*"

## CHAPTER V.

### RETROSPECTIVE.

IN less than half an hour he had left the place. Valdez accompanied him as far as the cafè door, but there, with scarcely the exchange of a word, they parted.

"Are you not going home, lad? Go home and get some sleep," the elder man said, speaking in a tone of great kindness and friendliness. And yes, Dino admitted, he was tired. And with that they separated: but he would not go home yet. With the instinct of one born and brought up by the sea, it was to the sea he turned, naturally and unconsciously, as another man might have turned to an open window. He walked fast until he reached the low parapet which runs along the embankment of the public walk; but, once there, his pace slackened. The night was growing quiet; the wind had fallen perceptibly with the setting of the moon. There were many clouds still, but broken and moving; and clear dark spaces of the sky where the stars sparkled frostily. Below, the

water was still restlessly leaping and falling beneath the low sea-wall, a dark unquiet surface crossed with long pale streaks of foam. He walked up and down, slowly, by the edge of a clump of ilex trees, his hands in his pockets, his head a little bent, in the attitude of a man who is thinking intently. Now and then, at the louder splash of some wave which broke higher than its fellows, he lifted up his face automatically and looked about him with a blank, confused stare. In truth he was feeling little more than an overwhelming sense of confusion; nothing seemed real, within or without; he was only conscious that all was changed around him, and he could not realize the blow.

Dino's strongest personal impressions, all his most treasured boyish remembrances, were in some way connected with his father, who had died young, and when the boy was not more than twelve or thirteen years of age. Any one else remembering Olinto de' Rossi,—had there indeed been any one left in the very least likely to speak of him,—any other person would, in all probability, have summed him up briefly as a handsome, fickle, enthusiastic young man, who — having begun life with a tolerable fortune, a persuasive tongue, a singularly equable and lovable temper, and an absolute incapacity for denying himself the smallest satisfaction—had

ended by dying miserably of consumption at thirty-five ; having in the interval married, spent all his money, and earned for himself some measure of local notoriety as a sort of popular demagogue, a speaker and leader at democratic meetings.

Chance having thrown him, while very young, among men of determined political sympathies, he had insensibly acquired so many of their opinions, which he afterwards retailed and amplified with so much natural ingenuity and eloquence, as to have earned no slight fame for himself as a radical patriot of extreme views. In point of fact he had taken to speech-making in the first place, almost by accident, and as he would have taken to drink, or to gambling, or to any other form of excitement which appealed to his pleasure-giving, pleasure-loving nature. And having once begun to taste the sweets of popularity, he was fascinated by them ; he required no especial convictions, the applause and admiration he received were quite enough to determine his vocation.

But it was not to be supposed that a reputation obtained in this manner could last for ever, or indeed for very long. Before many years had passed there had come a sensible diminution in the number and the fervor of De Rossi's political adherents. The elder men of his party

had long since ceased to take serious notice of his impassioned prophecies ; and now even the editors of the fiercest socialistic papers,—the compiler of *Il Lucifero* of Ancona, and the gentleman who was responsible for the appearance of the Leghorn *Thief*,—even they had begun to fight shy of their old and brilliant contributor. By the time little Dino was old enough to become his father's companion, following him about from meeting to meeting with undoubting, enthusiastic admiration and love, it is probable that the faith and awe the elder De Rossi excited in his little listener was very nearly the sum total of the credence he received.

On the whole, this defection did not depress him seriously. Perhaps he never thoroughly believed in it, or that he had in any way deserved it ; one's own account of one's motives, and the way they strike a friend, often bearing much the same relation to each other as a photograph does to a portrait. Each represents the same individual ; but one is fact ; the other may be a poem. And from first to last Dino saw nothing but the poem ; his father treating him throughout with a gentleness, a pride in his clever boy, and an amount of expansive affection which cost him nothing, and which bound the lad to him with a more than common reverence and love. As for his wife, for Dino's

mother, she was by nature a silent woman, who did not need to express all that she thought ; and this, Olinto sometimes reflected, was perhaps fortunate : the view other people take of the less admirable consequences of our actions being apt to strike one as morbid. After all, her husband was never positively unkind to her. He had never purposely deceived her. He was simply an ordinary man ; selfish, good-humored, eager for any new amusement ; a creature of fine moments and detestable habits. And, after all, when his wife had married him it was because she wanted to do so ; because nothing else could or would satisfy her. If she had made a mistake, well ! perhaps he too had had his illusions. And it is the law of life,—a woman loves what she can evoke ; but what she *marries* in a man is not his best, but his average, self.

Being gifted with a perfect, an unalterable, good-humor, De Rossi accepted his wife's altered opinion of him as he accepted the reduced circumstances of his material life : both were more or less of his own making, and between them they troubled him but very little. His experience of life was a succession of easy contentments. He enjoyed his own emotions. He liked sinning as he liked repenting, and in both phases he was alike sincere—and unreliable. He was capable of the deepest enthusiasms,—

the tenderest emotions; but he was unable to master his own shifting moods for a week. His facile nature lapsed away from the highest points it reached with the inevitableness of water which seeks its level. He was attractive; he was weak; he was untrustworthy;—and yet he was always attractive. “The sort of man,” Valdez said of him, “the sort of man who orders his dog ‘to come here,’ and when the beast lies down in a corner,—‘Ah, the clever dog! he knew I was going to tell him to do that next!’ says my amiable gentleman.”

Before her marriage—she was five years older than her husband—Catarina had been the confidential maid of the Marchesa Balbi. She had never wholly lost her place at the Villa. When the young heir was born, a month or two after the birth of Dino, she was, at her own earnest entreaty, made the *bália* of the little Marchese. Whenever the family came to Leghorn she was always going up to the Villa; the Marchesa was perpetually sending for her. There was no great mental barrier between the Italian lady and her old servant: both were convent bred, with much the same sort of education,—and what hopes and fears had they not shared since then in common! Catarina would stand for hours at the foot of her old mistress’s sofa, talking to her in undertones of things

which every one else had forgotten. The two women were bound to one another by a whole world of recollected emotions, — the night young Gasparo was ill ; his first steps ; the day he had first moved alone from the arms of his nurse to the arms of his mother, — to each of them these had been events in life.

As the years went by Olinto objected less and less to his wife's frequent absences. "She is a good woman, my Dino, but hard — hard," he would say sometimes to his boy ; and by the very passion with which the child loved him he could see how much he had inherited of his mother's loyal and serious nature. He began to fear vaguely lest, his boy growing older, he should begin to learn to judge him, — and he had grown strangely dependent on that one unhesitating faith.

Things were then in this condition, when one day, Dino being at the time some twelve years old, he was taken by his father to a political banquet, a sort of subscription supper given by one of the clubs to which Olinto had at some time belonged.

Dino never forgot that supper. There had been some objection made to his own presence when he was first taken in ; high words exchanged between some of the men present and his father ; sneering references, which the child only half understood, to other debts, and former feasts unpaid for. In the midst of the confusion

Dino saw his father rise suddenly from his place at the table ; he looked about him, waving his hand to command silence : his face was very white.

There was a general outcry of "Sit down ! sit down!"—"It's too early yet!"—"We don't want any more speeches ;" and then Dino saw the man who was sitting on his other side lean well forward and put his hand upon his father's shoulder. "Don't try and talk to them now. Wait till after supper. And—sit down De Rossi, do. There's a good fellow," he said. And then, as Olinto yielded mechanically to the pressure, his neighbor drew back, looking kindly enough into Dino's terrified face.

"Don't be frightened, my little fellow. They often make a noise at these suppers. It means —nothing," he said, with a half contemptuous smile.

Dino looked at him for a moment in silence. Then the boy's face flushed scarlet, and his eyes filled with tears.

"It can't mean anything," he said desperately. "My—my father would never have brought me here if he did not mean to pay for it." But he did not look at his father, who was arguing eagerly across the table with his opposite neighbor, and there was a lump in his throat which seemed to choke him as he spoke.

"What, are you Olinto's little chap ? Is De

Rossi your father? And what's your name, then? What do you call yourself, my little lad?" the stranger asked good-naturedly.

"My name is Bernardino. But they call me Dino at home," the boy said, rather huskily.

"Well, then, Dino, my boy, eat your supper, and don't trouble your head about what does n't concern you. Your share of it shall be paid for, never fear. Now then, what's the matter now? Don't sit and stare at your father. He won't notice you. He's—busy. If you are wise you'll tell *me* what you want," he repeated, with the same equivocal smile.

There was something in his kind and melancholy face which had won the boy's entire confidence. "I am afraid, sir—I don't think my father has got enough money with him," he said hastily, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes. When he ventured to look up he met his neighbor's glance fixed full upon him with a certain friendly amusement.

"So you are Olinto de' Rossi's son," he said slowly; and Dino wondered to hear him say it, for surely he knew that already. "Well, well. *Per Bacco!* if the evolutionists are to be trusted, why, here's a curious experiment of Dame Nature. Well, look here, my boy, did you ever see me before?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever hear your father speak of Pietro Valdez?"

"No, sir."

"H'm. Well! that's my name. And I spend my time teaching people how to play the guitar, and tuning pianos: that's my trade. So now you know who I am. And I've known your father a good many years now, first and last, a good many years. Just tell him to turn around for a moment. I say, De Rossi— You look out for yourself; I don't want to crush you, my boy."

He leaned well forward, and spoke in a low voice to Olinto. Dino was crouching back in his chair: he could not hear what passed between the two men; but half an hour later, and having in the mean time, and at the instigation of his new friend, partaken heartily of his supper, he had the satisfaction of seeing his father carelessly fling a gold piece into the subscription plate, where it lay and glittered obtrusively among the pile of meaner silver coins.

The boy's eyes sparkled with triumph at the sight. He looked up with a frank laugh into the face of his new companion. "Did you see that, sir?" he asked eagerly, his face all aglow.

"Ay," Valdez answered almost indifferently. He leaned back on his chair and contemplated the row of faces before him. "Presently they

will begin their fine speechifying. Look here, my boy, I see signs — never mind what they are, — but I see symptoms of a coming row. It will be nothing to speak of, I daresay, but all the same I want you to promise me this : If I send you home, I want you to cut away at once without stopping to ask questions, do you see ? Now promise me you 'll do that, like a good little chap."

"I 'll stay with my father, sir. I must stay with my father. And if you please, sir, I 'd rather stay, really. I 'm not afraid."

"Now, who ever supposed you were afraid, my little man ? But that is not the question. Now, look here — ah ! — "

He stopped short. A sudden silence had fallen upon the room. A man near him roared out "Hush !" and smote the table before him with his clenched fist. For the last time in his life Olinto de' Rossi had risen to make a speech.

He had been very quiet all the previous part of the evening, sitting most of the time with his head leaning upon his hand, hardly speaking to any one, not even to his boy. As he rose slowly to his feet a wild burst of ironical applause greeted him from every part of the room ; only Valdez sat silent and motionless, staring down at his plate with a moody troubled face. De Rossi stood leaning a little forward ; his thin cheeks, which had grown so deadly pale of

late, were burning now with vivid spots of red. "Friends," he began, "Gentlemen—" He hesitated for an instant, then burst into wild invective against Church and King and State. "The State—the State, I tell you, is the very negation of liberty," he cried, "and no matter who command, they make all serve. You talk, some of you, of changing the political *régime*. How will you change it? For what good? If a man among you has a thorn in his foot, will it help him if he change his boots? I tell you, it is the thorn, the thorn itself, that you must get out,—wrench out, cut out, if need be. We, the people, how often have we asked our rulers for bread and they have given us a stone? Yet this is scarcely prudent, friends, for a stone is a fair missile. What! will they live on in their princely palaces and offer to us, to the people, the bare right and privilege of labor? Labor! I tell you that God Himself has set His curse upon labor. I—tell—you—"

His voice had failed him suddenly. He put his hand up to his head, staring wildly about him.

"Go on, go on! That's the right sort of stuff. Down with everything! A general mess and scrimmage, and myself dancing on the top of it; that's your real radical programme. That's what you call reform!" a man in the crowd at the foot of the table cried out derisively. There

was a general laugh ; some indication of a wish to hustle him into silence ; some shouts of "*Viva De Rossi !*" The men had all been drinking freely, and were ripe for any mischief.

"I say, De Rossi, get up on your chair, man. We can't hear you," some one called out again ; the suggestion was received with another hoarse roar of approval. Two or three men moved towards the orator as if with the intention of forcing him to adopt this new position.

"For God's sake, can't you let the man alone ? Don't you see that he is ill ?" cried Valdez, suddenly starting forward.

Some one, more humane than his fellows, had poured De Rossi out a glass of wine. He lifted it to his lips now, facing them all, with flushed face and wild glittering eyes, "I drink to your health, gentlemen !"

He stood so for a second amidst frantic shouts of applause, with one hand outstretched. To Dino's eyes he looked like a demi-god mastering a whirlwind. And then all of a sudden the brimming glass slipped from his nerveless hand, and was dashed into a thousand pieces. He watched it fall with a half-bewildered laugh ; he staggered, and clutched at the table ; a sudden red mark discolored his smiling mouth, and he fell heavily forward, face downwards, without a word or a groan.

He had broken a blood-vessel ; he was still

insensible as they carried him back to his home through the dark and empty streets ; and Dino walked beside the litter and held his father's hand. His wife met them at the door with Palmira, who was then a baby, in her arms. Her face seemed turned to stone as she listened to Valdez's explanations. Only, as they laid her husband gently down upon his bed and uncovered his face, a quick spasm contracted her rigid mouth, and she stooped and kissed the dying man upon his forehead.

"I knew it would come. It had to come," she said drearily. And after that she scarcely spoke again, turning away from all consolation, and seeming to find relief only in the few practical cares which were left to her.

And so, like some impatient wave breaking too far from shore, whose troubled existence reaches its climax in but one instant of wasted force, in the midst of a sea where every wave which lifts itself must fall, so Olinto died, and his idle raving was hushed, and his place knew him no more. Of mourners he had few or none ; it was only to his boy that he left so much as a memory. That was almost the lad's entire heritage, that and the friendship of Pietro Valdez.

As little Dino grew up every other detail of his life seemed to change about him, as things do change in the lives of people too poor to order

their surrounding circumstances. The Marchesa came less and less often to the Villa Balbi ; he had lost the familiar companionship of his foster-brother ; of his first childish recollections there was only old Drea left, and the dear face of Italia, to illuminate the past. But, whatever else was altered, he had never lost sight of Valdez. Indeed, since that night the man seemed to have taken a strange fancy to the boy ; as the years went on those two were always more and more together ; an arbitrary friendship, in which one was ever the leader and teacher and guide.

Even to Dino there was always a certain mystery about Valdez, but it was the mystery of pure blankness ; there were no secrets about him, chiefly because he seemed to own no history. He never willingly spoke of himself, or alluded to former acquaintances or habits. If he had any one belonging to him, if he had ever been married, no one precisely knew. He never spoke to women, or appeared interested in them. He lived alone, where he had lived for twenty years in two small rooms in one of the narrowest streets, of Leghorn. His wants were few and unchanging, and the money which he earned amply sufficed for them. In his working hours he followed his trade, as he called it, with the sober exactitude and indifference of a machine. He was a Spaniard by birth, and a Protestant by

conviction ; and he believed in a coming universal republic as he believed in the rising of the sun. After a dozen years of companionship that was the most that Dino knew of him.

As he paced up and down there by the sea, a hundred confused images and impressions came floating back out of that past to Dino. His father's face, and the unforgotten sound of his voice, — Sor Checco, Gasparo, Drea, dear old Valdez, and those men at the café to-night, and the scene this morning at the office, and the scene at the banquet, that other night long ago, — how long ago it seemed! It was as if some storm-wave breaking over his life and soul had stirred the very depths of old remembrance, until he could scarcely distinguish the actual from the past, the living from the dead. They were all mixed up with the darkness and the wind and the sense of the restless seething water about him.

When he thought of Italia he stopped short. He could not, he *would* not, think of Italia — not then. He could bear nothing further to-night, he told himself, with a curious sense of relief and quiet. The measure was full ; he could realize nothing more. And, indeed, beyond great pain as beyond great joy, there is this mysterious region of rest. Great passions end in calm, as the two poles are surrounded by similar spaces of silent, ice-locked sea.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MORNING AFTER.

A WOMAN'S anxiety is always awake, always asking. She entreats to know in direct proportion to her dread of the coming knowledge. How could it well be otherwise, while her life is one frail tissue of delicate probabilities, in the midst of which she waits, like a spider in its net, for the possible gifts of fate? And the web may glisten as it will in the sunlight; it makes but a poor shield against a blow.

As Catarina busied herself about her ordinary household work that next morning there were faint new lines of care about her close-shut mouth, and the orbits of her eyes were darkened as if with sleeplessness and long watching. But, whatever had troubled her, she made no direct mention of it to Dino, — setting his belated breakfast before him carefully but in silence. It was not until he pushed aside his plate and stood up, reaching mechanically for his hat, ready to go out, that she admitted to herself that if she wanted an explanation she must ask for it; or

seemed to notice his movements, and even then it was only to say indifferently,

“Shall you be home to dinner? Or do you mean to stay at Drea’s? is that a part of your new arrangements?”

“Nay, but, mother, I am sorry to have given you so much more trouble. The fact is I—I overslept myself this morning. When I came in last night I was more tired than I knew,” said Dino cheerfully.

“Ay, when you came in! When you did come! It was after ten o’clock when you brought home that blessed child, so worn out with the wind and what not that she fell asleep on my knee, bless her little heart! before I had fairly time to get her clothes off. And after that I sat up for three hours in that chair, Dino. It was striking one by the Duomo clock before I went to bed.”

She turned to the dresser by the wall and began reaching down plate after plate, and looking at each one as she wiped it. “I had this china before you were born; the Signora Marchesa took me with her to choose it—and it was my wedding present from the Villa, sent down by one of the footmen the day after I was married. I was sitting by that window when it was brought in,—a great heavy basket that the man could hardly lift upon the table,—only your father

helped him. And there was never a piece of it broken until you knocked down the saucer the day I asked you to help me with the cups. But it's ungrateful work taking care o' things that just end by being used by others who don't see any difference. There's a plenty o' people in the world have got brighter eyes for looking at their sweethearts with than for looking after their husband's house. Palmira tells me that my boy, my young master, is at home again, Dino?"

"Ay, Signor Gasparo's here."

"And went to see Sor Drea on his very first evening! He used to come to me. *Guarda questa!* But young men will be young men. And 'tis true that Andrea has sense enough to look after that girl of his. She's given *you* enough encouragement — "

"Mother!" said Dino in his severest voice, — a voice which secretly awed her.

He faced around suddenly, and stood looking at her as she moved to and fro.

"Mother! it is not generous, it is not kind, to speak of Italia in that fashion. And you know it hurts me. I love her," he said, his voice changing. "Of course I love her. I don't care who knows that I love her. But encouragement! I don't know what you mean. Encouragement from Italia! She has never thought of such a thing; she would not know what you meant — "

"Eh, don't tell me, lad. I've been a girl myself. 'T is a poor dog that does n't know when he's wagging his own tail," cried Catarina bitterly, stooping to wipe the dust off the leg of a chair with the corner of her apron. She made a busy pretence of it for a moment or two, and then her hands dropped helplessly; she stood up and looked at her tall son. "An' so you love her;—you love that little girl! You never told me of it before, lad."

"But, mother dear, you never asked me. I always thought you knew it. It was plain enough. And how was I to guess you wanted to be told? I have never even told—her," the young man said.

"And *she* was to come first? Nay, 't is but natural. The young birds build new nests. Ah, but, Dino! Dino! I've lost you. I've lost my own boy—"

Her voice broke; she turned abruptly away, and hid her gray head upon her clasped hands.

"But, mother dear,—dearest mother!"

He stood with one hand on her shoulder, looking down at her bowed head with a curiously-blended feeling of distress over her grief and impatience at its unreasonableness; "Mother! After all, you must have expected it sooner or later: it is but natural—"

"Yes, lad. I know. 'T is as you say: 't is

natural," Catarina said meekly; and then she turned her face away again with a sob and a feeling of utter inevitable loneliness. How could the lad understand? He was young and she was growing old; and to him what was natural was easy, and to her it was hard. That was all the difference.

She swallowed something in her throat, a lump which seemed to choke her, and stood up. "*Poverino!* I won't tease you any more: don't be vexed with me, lad," she said soothingly, looking into his perplexed face with a quivering smile. She put up her hand to brush off an imaginary speck of dust from his coat. "Nay, 'tis no wonder if people love you. Go, my Dino, go to — her," she said; and as Dino bent his head and kissed her, "It's because I am sending him away," she thought, bitterly enough.

"And how about Monte Nero, mother? The pilgrimage, you know. Italia was asking about it last night," he said cheerfully, glad to see her beginning to accept things more placidly.

"Ay, lad, I'll think of it; but go now, go. I will not — I cannot — I mean, do as you please. Make all your plans, and I will help you carry them out. It's what I'm good for now, I suppose. I must learn not to stand in your way — and hers."

"Mother!"

"I — Don't mind me, my Dino. Don't be

angry with your old mother, my own boy. It was only a—a surprise. I shall be all right when you come back ; for you will come back to dinner, my Dino ? I am good for that much : I can take care of you still."

She followed him to the door, and then went and stood by the open window, shading her eyes from the bright March sun, to watch him as he passed down the street. Perhaps he would turn his head and look up. But no. From that height she could not distinguish his face ; she felt a pang of idle regret at the thought ; he seemed to get so soon beyond her reach. After a while she went into her son's room, and opened all his drawers, and began to turn over his possessions. She folded an old coat which she found on the back of a chair : she folded it carefully. I am not sure that she did not kiss it. Everything belonging to him with which she had anything to do was kept in the most scrupulous order, and she wanted to find something to mend, some work which she could do for him.

There was a small faded photograph, a portrait of his father, hanging over the young man's bed. She went and looked at it as it hung against the wall, then took it down and stood with it in her hand. It was the likeness of a man who had been in every way a disappointment in her life ; but she was not thinking of that now. The faded

face looked at her out of the past with its easy confident smile. She only remembered the first year or two after her marriage, and her young husband's kindness to her, and his first pride and pleasure in their boy. "If *he* had not gone, there would have been some one left to understand," she thought. Her own personal life seemed ended; she gazed with the strangest pang of regret and companionship at this fading likeness of the dead face she had loved in her youth. What if afterwards he had neglected her? At least he had come to her once of his own accord, for her own sake,—and they had been young together.

She felt herself quite alone, this austere and self-contained woman,—alone in a world which could never change for the better now; in which each new morning would only bring new deprivations in place of fresh joys.

Dino had dressed himself in workman's clothes that morning. Drea did not expect him yet, but it was just possible there might be something which wanted doing in the boat. It was such a bright fresh morning after the storm; a morning to make young hearts beat lightly and young blood run fast with a quick sense and joy of dear life. But as he turned mechanically down the busy Via Grande he saw nothing of

all this. His mother's words, the way in which she had taken it for granted that if he loved Italia, Italia must love him, and how there could be but one possible solution to their lives, all that would have been so natural, so full of hope and radiant happiness last month, last week—last week? only yesterday, only one day ago! And now; oh, the bitter irony of fate! it was he himself who had forged the chain which bound him. He cursed his own folly. Why could he not have been contented? was he not deeply enough involved before then? why could he not have let that last crowning piece of madness alone?

The look of the commonplace crowd around him, the presence of those scores of hurrying, interested, contented, busy men, the very look of the shop windows, all things seemed to conspire together to discredit and ridicule the devoted side, the dramatic side, the only possible side, of his situation. In a world like this,—a world of common-sense and convenience and keen enjoyments, a world of sunlight and youth and possibilities, to choose deliberately, at four-and-twenty, to throw away all one's future, all one's love, all one's life in doing—*that*. Damn it! Even to himself he would never mention that accursed plan, he would never think of it.

He thrust his hands deeper into the great pockets of his rough jacket, and threw up his head defiantly, as he glanced about him. And each house he passed, each soldier, each policeman, each lamp-post even,—every visible sign of peace and law and order,—seemed a tangible ironical comment on his folly. And why, in God's name, had he done this thing? He remembered so well that evening,—it was after their demonstration had been dispersed by the police, and he was hot with a sense of battle, and wild with excitement, with bitter baffled indignation. It had seemed so easy a thing then to pledge away his future. He had done it without consulting Valdez,—suddenly, madly, on the desperate impulse of the moment. He had done it in a moment of mental crisis; because he was imaginative, because he believed in the cause, heart and soul, because he had been a fool. And as he said that to himself some old words of Pietro Valdez came back to him with sudden force out of some old forgotten talk of theirs,—“How can any one believe in your highest emotions?” He heard the familiar voice asking him, “How can you expect any one to believe in your highest emotions if you question them yourself?”

The softest wind blew in his face and he did not feel it, the sunlight rested on him, the sky

was blue and white ; but he had ceased to look even at the passers-by. He felt like a man awakened from a dream, when a hand touched him, and a voice spoke in his ear, and he looked up and recognized the Marchese Gasparo.

" Hallo, old boy, are you asleep ? are you dreaming ? what the devil is the matter with you ? "

They had met in front of the Giappone the fashionable restaurant of Leghorn, where Gasparo had been breakfasting with a couple of his friends. The two other men strolled off a few paces and waited, smoking their long thin cigars, and eying Dino with a languid curiosity. Gasparo, too, looked at his altered dress with some exclamation of surprise.

" What is the meaning of that new toggery ? " he demanded. " I had to look twice to make sure it was you. What are you up to now, old fellow, eh ? Is all that to oblige our good Andrea ? " And then, without waiting for an answer : " See here, Dino, you 're the very man I want. But stop a moment. First of all, are you going anywhere in particular ? "

" I am going to Drea's," Dino said.

" To wish our pretty little friend good morning, eh, my Dino ? Jove, how pretty that girl looked in the firelight singing ! But never mind that. You can do something for me before you

go there, can't you? Women are never the worse for being kept waiting; in fact, it does them good, and their hearts get softer with time, just as a peach softens when you leave it for a bit to ripen on the tree. I say, Dino, be a good obliging fellow for once. You are not really in a hurry?"

"No, sir."

"*Benissimo!* Then you can go and do an errand for me. I want—Look here; it's a letter I want carried. Rather an important letter. It's—it's a love-letter, in fact," said Gasparo, beginning to laugh, "and I want it taken to the woman with the most beautiful eyes in Leghorn—the most beautiful? well, at least I thought so until yesterday. She is—her name is written on the envelope. But it is not to be taken to her house, you understand? She is at Pancaldi's this morning, at the Stabilimento. Go straight in to the platform where the baths are in summer; you'll find her there, looking at the waves." He laughed, brushing up his moustache. "So there you are; and now right about face—march! Why, man, what are you staring at? There's the letter; and I say, Dino, mind you give it to her quietly; just slip it into her hand, you know, as if it were the answer to some commission. Faith! they *are* pretty eyes, if they're not so bright as Italia's."

Dino turned red ; he drew his shoulder away from the Marchese's careless touch. "I— You must excuse me, sir," he said roughly. "Get some one else to carry your letter. I won't go."

"Hullo!" The Marchese threw back his head. "Then—oh, go to the devil!" he said, and turned lightly on his heel.

He walked off for a pace or two and stopped, irresolute. It was really very awkward about that letter. He wanted it taken ; he could not carry it himself, and to find another trustworthy messenger at a moment's notice— He turned back.

"I say, old fellow, don't you think this is treating me rather badly ? It is not every one whom I'd ask to do this thing for me, but you — why, we've been boys together, you and I." A smile lighted up his handsome face. "I'd do as much for you any day, old Dino ; for you and your sweetheart."

Among all the men of his time, the young Marchese, Gasparo Balbi, was one of the most personally attractive. He was the most popular man in his regiment ; he fascinated the very orderly who cleaned his boots, and all women and all children loved him. Wherever he went — in a ballroom, or in the streets — people turned in the same way to look at him. His

mere presence was an irresistible argument. When he talked, it is possible that what he said was neither particularly fresh nor particularly new, but that did not matter ; his silence and his speech were alike persuasive. He had all the qualities of a ruler and leader of men,— strong animal magnetism, an irresistible audacity, an implacable will. He was like one of the English Stuarts in his wonderful faculty of awakening passionate loyalty and enthusiasm in all who came into personal relations with him ; perhaps he was still more like them in his power of using his friends, his capacity for charming and — forgetting.

He stood there now smiling in the sunlight, like a young prince whose good pleasure it is to explain when he need only command.

“ Come, my Dino ; I know you better than you know yourself. Surely you are not going to refuse to do this for me ? ” he said.

He smiled again as De Rossi went off with the letter. If the Contessa did not like it — well ? He thought of her pleasantly, holding, as he did, the easy Italian creed that, if money is the root of all evil, women are at least its flower. Still, if the Contessa did not like it, if by any chance she cared to make herself disagreeable — she *could* get into a rage ; that was certain — well ? He adjusted his sword belt a little and

strolled back to his friends, whistling softly in an undertone.

" Been giving that young fellow a rating, eh, Gasparo? He looked at you at one moment as if he would not be sorry to measure the length of his knife against your ribs," remarked one of the men who had been waiting for him.

" I was only giving him a commission. He 's my foster-brother, by the way, that chap, and would go through fire and water to serve me. So much for your powers of discrimination, my Nello," said Gasparo carelessly.

He linked his arm in that of his friend, and they lounged slowly away together through the crowded street.

Dino meanwhile was walking down the empty parade, on the farther side of that straggling, weather-beaten row of trees which stands between the Passeggiata and the low sea-wall. It was the same ground which he had trodden the night before in his despair, and now he was being sent over it again to carry a note at Gasparo's bidding. It was as if Fate had determined to ridicule each turn of his fortunes. He was tasting that experience which is common to all people who get into the way of considering their lives from the outside,—dramatically, as it were; the experience of those who, having many gifts, yet lack simplicity. He con-

templated and criticised any mental crisis in which he found himself involved until it lost all sense of reality and became a *situation*. He was, if possible, too clever, too sensitive. He frittered his attention away on the by-play of life. As he walked along in the sunshine of that morning, beside the blue and placid sea, it was still very much of an open question with Dino what real *rôle* he was to enact in life ; it would depend so much upon whom he met ; upon association and circumstance ; perhaps chiefly upon some secret pressure of influence ; the gift or the curse of some unconscious soul.

He walked slowly, but it was not far to the entrance of the Stabilimento. Two men were lounging in the gateway. One of them looked hard at Dino, at his preoccupied face, and the careless workman's dress.

"Here ! Give me your letter and I 'll take it in for you, *giovane mio*," he said good-naturedly.

Dino threw back his head with an involuntary expression of annoyance.

"I carry my own messages," he answered shortly.

"A thousand pardons ! Evidently the Signor — the Signor Carpenter, shall I say ? or the Signor *Facchino* ? — evidently he wishes to pay for his entrance, then ? For let me tell you that

Pancaldi's is like the gate of Paradise ; you don't go in without a proper *lasciapassare*."

" Nay, can't you let the fellow alone, Beppi ? Can't you see that he is carrying a message ? Let him in, you idiot, else we shall have the Padrone himself down upon us," the other man added in a voice like an intermittent growl. He moved back a step or two, making room for Dino to pass. " Come in, come in, *bel giovane*. You need never mind my comrade here ; you cannot quarrel with a dog for barking at his own gate. *Via*," he said, with a wave of his hand, " put up your purse, my lad. Save the money to buy your sweetheart a fairing. Nay, if you won't believe me, you can read, I suppose ? and there it is written up on the board in front of you, *Children and servants, admittance free*. And so put up your money, I tell you."

" And pray who the devil told you that I was a servant ?" demanded Dino, thrusting his hand into his pocket and drawing out a crumpled bit of paper. It was the last five-franc note he had in the world ; he tossed it contemptuously across the wooden ledge in front of him. " Pay yourself, and try to know a gentleman the next time you see one, will you ?"

" Ah, a fine gentleman, truly," said the man called Beppi, picking up the note and contemplating it with a sneer.

"*Perdio,*" added his companion, "a man with money is a man in the right. So put that in your pipe, *amico mio*, and smoke it. Ay, money, it's like one's other blood ; a man with empty pockets, 't is but a dead man walking."

"Oh, that's all very fine, but *I* like consistency. A gentleman's a gentleman, *I* say. It never was so much of a world to boast of at the best, and when it comes to a new tax upon the wine, and not so much as the prospect of half a day's holiday just to make a feast for the blessed Madonna of Monte Nero,—and common workmen who go about throwing five-franc notes in your face, as if the world had gone mad. *I* like consistency, that's what *I* say," retorted Beppi, in a voice which grew gradually lower as he looked from the note between his finger and thumb at Dino's receding figure.

It was scarcely more than a moment before De Rossi had come upon the object of his search. He recognized her immediately ; indeed he had often before seen her passing in her carriage, a beautiful impassive figure, wrapped in her costly Russian furs. She was alone now, leaning over the balustrade with her eyes fixed vaguely upon the changing ripples of the sea. At any other moment Dino might have felt a certain timidity in approaching her ; but the irritation of that challenge at the gate was still strong

upon him. This woman here was only another of those aristocrats whose privileged existences made life intolerable. Was it intolerable by conviction of its injustice, or only by force of contrast?

But he troubled himself with no such inquiry as he went up to her. He lifted his hat: "Pardon my disturbing you; but I bring a message — a letter — from the Signor Marchese Gasparo Balbi," he said.

She was a tall young woman, nearly as tall as himself; that was the first thing he noticed. He saw her gloved hand start and shut more closely over the railing of the balcony at the first sound of his voice. But that was the only sign of surprise which she gave. There was not a quiver of perceptible emotion on the pale inscrutable face which she turned so slowly towards him.

"*Bene.* You may give me the letter. Thanks."

She held out her gauntleted hand with a gesture of superb indifference, and then, as her dark glance rested for the first time upon Dino, she raised her perfect eyebrows with a slight expression of wonder. She had expected to see Gasparo's soldier servant. She turned her face away from him.

"Madame Helwige!"

A little old woman dressed in black, who had been quietly seated in a sunny corner, reading a Tauchnitz novel under the shade of a large parasol, rose quickly and came forward at this call.

"The Signora Contessa desires —"

"My purse. Yes. I want some money," the young woman said impatiently. She made no secret of the letter she had received, holding it by one corner, and tapping the top railing with it to the measure of an inaudible tune.

"Then, if I can do nothing more for you, I will go. I have the honor of wishing you good morning," added Dino quietly, turning away.

"Stop a moment. This lady will give you something for your trouble. Or — stop! Who are you? What is your name?"

"Bernardino de' Rossi."

"Ah. The Marchese Gasparo's foster-brother. That explains. I have heard him mention you: he says you are one of the discontented people, — a radical, a red republican, *que sais je, moi?* Is it true?" she asked calmly, fixing her large disdainful eyes upon the young man's face.

He bowed gravely. "Since the Signora Contessa does me the honor to inquire. I am a radical; that is my belief."

"Really? And you think we are all equal? We are all equally discontented, 't is true enough;

*mais après ?*" She struck the balustrade lightly with her letter. "Do you see the water beating against that wall of rock, Signor de' Rossi? Twice a day the tide comes in, and before the waves can climb half-way up the cliff, twice a day the tide goes out. 'T is the same way with the people's anger — ebb and flow. And the greatest storm can only wet the rocks ; it can't uproot them. What do you Italians know about such things? But I, I am a Russian, and I know." She looked out to sea again. "When the waves beat too fiercely against the shore the rock breaks them," she said.

Then she looked at Dino tranquilly. "I have heard the Marchese Gasparo speak of you ; he takes an interest in you. It would be a pity if you should disappoint him," she added, and moved away slowly with a careless bend of her head.

Dino stood as she had left him for a long moment, holding his hat in his hand, the wind just ruffling the thick hair on his forehead, gazing fixedly out to sea. He stood like a man under the influence of some spell. Then, as he looked up and caught the curious glance of the Countess's companion fixed full upon him, he hastily replaced his hat and turned away.

Just outside the gate he came upon Valdez with a roll of music in his hand, going about his work. Dino nodded to him ; he would not stop

to speak. The older man slackened his pace, looking at him rather sadly, as if he were sorry for something, then passed on. Afterwards it struck Dino that they had never happened to pass one another in this silent way before. He stopped, looking down the long street at the old familiar figure. But what had they to say to each other now, even if he should turn and overtake him ? Dino was like a man under sentence of death ; all the minor obligations of life seemed annulled and suspended ; where they clung still it was by force of habit, like the withering tendrils of a vine cut down at the root.

A great impatience of trouble had fallen upon him : he wanted no more emotion, no more effort. There was a clear fortnight, perhaps three weeks before — before he would be sent to Rome. Well ! he wanted that time to himself, and he intended to have it, he intended to be happy. The first great shock of the surprise was over : his nature had already re-adjusted itself to these new conditions with the supple strength of youth. And in this fixed interval of quiet, — this interval, which seemed all the longer by very reason of its being fixed, — all the light, joy-loving instincts of his age were alert within him, making music in his heart, like the rapturous song of birds between two storms. The habit of life, its careless young incredulity of the end, had never

been more strong upon him ; he had never felt more irresponsible ; had never looked, perhaps had never been, more like his father than on that morning, as he turned down from the broad sunny Passeggiata towards old Drea's house on the quay.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ITALIA.

SEEN by daylight, the entrance to Drea's house was not unlike the entrance of a cave. The house itself was in a corner of the canal, flush with the water, below the level of the street, and consisted of two rooms,—the long, large entrance room where the table had been laid for the birthday supper, and another much smaller chamber beyond, which belonged to Italia, and was lighted by a very small, round window like the port-hole of a ship, which looked out upon the water on the other side of the bridge. The whole place indeed had been originally designed for a Government boat-house and store-house, and was sunk in the thickness of the massive stone pier.

On a sunny morning like this, when the door was thrown wide open, any painter passing that way would have been charmed by the mysterious look of the interior, the dark-raftered ceiling, the smoke-embrowned fireplace, above which a row of bright brass plates made round spots of light in the darkness, and then the heavy coils of rope

and the spare oars, arranged with all a sailor's habit of neatness, against the whitewashed wall. At dusk, and when the fire was burning, it was like looking at an interior of Rembrandt's to watch the play of light and shadow over the rich ruddy brown tones of the room ; but on this particular morning the fire had been allowed to sink to a mere handful of red embers, and the room was full of the fresh smell of the sea air and the brightness of the March sunshine.

At the foot of the stone steps leading down from the street before Drea's door there was a narrow strip of stone pavement, and a floating wooden stage where the boat was moored. In the corner there, where the angle of the great granite buttress made a sheltered spot, was Italia's favorite seat. By sitting well back in the shadow one was entirely out of sight, unless indeed some especially adventurous spirit be-thought himself to take the trouble to lean bodily over the parapet of the bridge overhead. But it was too busy a part of Leghorn for much idling : all day long the tramp, tramp of hurrying feet, and the hollow rumbling of the weighted carts rolling towards the lading ships, made a dull, continuous bass, which effectually covered any sound of voices. Italia could sing there by the hour over her work, sure of never being heard, save perhaps by some taciturn weather-beaten

fisherman poling his flat-bottomed boat into the quieter water of the canal. It was Drea's own landing-stage, and he was jealous of his rights to it, giving but few boats the privilege of mooring there for an hour. Since the building of the railway, now that the canal has ceased to be of use for the heavier traffic between Leghorn and Pisa, a quieter spot than this could scarcely be imagined. For even the supposititious idler would scarcely be tempted to look this way when, just across the bridge, by leaning over the opposite balustrade, one could look down upon all the hurry and interest of the Old Port, and watch the slow heaving of the anchors, the puffing excitement of the blackened vessels getting up steam, or the continual come-and-go of the little boats among the shipping.

The noise and the hurry passed like an unheeded stream around Italia's sheltered corner. Dino had compared her once to an enchanted princess, and her quaint rooms, with the silent, sunny platform in front of them, to a strip of enchanted ground set apart from the disturbing commonplaces of life. The remembrance of the old fancy brought a smile upon his lips as he ran lightly down the steps that morning. Drea was not there, and the old boat was not at her mooring, but Italia was sitting just where he had expected to find her. She held a book in her

hand, but she was not reading, she was looking dreamily at the lazy lapping of the water against the old wooden stage. She wore the same blue cotton dress as on the previous night, but she had taken off her beads and clasp, and tied a scarlet handkerchief about her neck. Her hat was lying on the ground beside her ; Dino picked it up, and his first greeting was one of playful reproof.

“ Bareheaded in this March sunshine, my Italia ? *Pazzarella !* Your father was right indeed when he said it required two of us to look after you.”

“ *Dino mio !* ”

She looked up at him with a wide, dreamy glance, which suddenly grew bright and loving. The hot color rushed to her cheeks, and she put up her little brown hands as if to hide them, while she laughed and shook her head.

“ *Marzo pazzo*, ah, yes, I know it. But indeed, Dino, this is much more likely to drive me to distraction.” She opened the book on her lap, and turned over half a dozen pages. “ I have really tried to learn it, really. But it is so difficult ; you have no idea how difficult it is, Dino.”

“ Poor little thing ! It is a shame to give it such hard lessons,” said Dino in a caressing tone, looking down at the rough, brown hair. He threw himself down on the pavement in the

shadow at her feet, and put up his hand for the book.

"Here ! let me have a look at it, and see if I can't do something to make it easier for you. What is it ? Arithmetic ? Oh ! but this is what I gave you to do long ago. No wonder you find it difficult ; you have had time to forget all my explanations. Let me see now ; have you a pencil ?"

"Yes ; but you can't write with it. I've broken the point."

"Give it here, then, you helpless baby !"

He took a knife out of his pocket, and picking up the pencil began to sharpen it while she sat watching him, her dark eyes full and bright with such an expression of unquestioning content as one is not accustomed to expect on faces which have outgrown their first childish calm. The water of the canal was as blue that morning as the stainless sky which it reflected, and it seemed almost as still ; only now and then the faintest ripple breaking against the step with a weak splash and stir which made the sunbeams sparkle under the wooden platform. Beyond the dark archway of the bridge the white-sailed boats came and went ; her glance followed their movement with a vague sense of happy peace. She was realizing for the first time the ideal of all loving-natured women : she was feeling her

happiness depend upon the will of the man she trusted. When Dino looked up at her inquiringly she started, as if indeed awakened from a dream.

"Have you understood? Is that plain enough? Oh, Italia! Italia! for shame! Is that the way to treat a learned professor? You have not been looking at the book after all," he said laughing, but shaking his head with mock severity.

The color rushed back to her cheeks. "Oh! I am so sorry, Dino; I forgot."

"Now, if I were your father I should tell you that one does not carry flowers to the mill when what one wants is bread; and the quickest way to become an arithmetician is not to sit watching for the boat. By the way, speaking of the boat, Sor Drea must have gone out early this morning."

"Yes; he went at daybreak; he woke me up to tell me he was going. He took Maso with him to help with the nets."

"Ah! I wish I had known," said Dino quickly.

"Father thought of going for you; then he said you would be tired,—you had a hard day yesterday. And Sora Catarina would not know yet of your arrangement; she would have been frightened if you had been fetched away suddenly in the middle of the night."

She glanced quickly at him, and added, "I am glad they did not go for you; you look so tired this morning, Dino, as if you had not slept."

"I did not sleep — much," he said absently.

He threw his arm up and laid his head against it. His face was almost on a level now with the blue ripple of the water. There was a handful of loose straw floating about among the piles : he watched it come and go as the current sucked in under the landing-stage. What was the good of thinking — of remembering ? Why had Italia alluded to last night ? Was he never to forget it for five minutes ?

He sat up abruptly, brushing the hair out of his eyes ; but as he moved she spoke.

"Won't you give me the book now, Dino ?" She bent her head down over it : "I did not mean to vex you ; I did not mean to tease you when you are so tired."

She looked so like a child submitting to some half-understood reproof that Dino could scarcely restrain the impulse of mingled tenderness and adoration which made him long to take her in his arms and kiss her. But he forced himself to answer lightly : "What nonsense, little one ; as if anything you did could vex me !" He looked about him : "I suppose I ought to be going now. There is no telling when Sor Drea will be in if he has taken the nets ; but I wish you would sing to me — just one song before I go." He took the book away from her and closed it gently. "After all, you are right ; it is better to have

music than to do one's lesson on such a morning. Sums are made for different weather, are they not, Italia *mia*? For days when the *libeccio* blows, and one does not mind wasting a whole morning over one terrible bit of multiplication."

"Oh, but even I am not quite so bad as that," said Italia quickly. "I had only just brought out my book when you came; before then I had been talking to the Signor Padrone."

"What!" said Dino, in quite an altered voice. He noticed the change himself, but he could not prevent it; it was all he could do to ask the question quietly, "Has — has the Marchese Gasparo been here?"

"Surely," said Italia, looking at him with some surprise; "he came here about an hour ago to speak about the boat to my father. He wants to take a party of his friends out for a sail." She added: "I thought you knew he had been here; he told me he had met you."

"No, I did not know it," said Dino, speaking between his teeth.

All the radiant sweetness of the day seemed blotted out before him. It was very well for that child there innocently to accept this fiction about the boat; but did not he, Dino, understand Gasparo better? A dozen stories of the handsome Captain's powers of fascination flashed back across him. He thought of the woman to

whom he had carried the letter that very morning. The letter! It was a trick to get him out of the way; that was why Gasparo had turned that friendly, smiling face upon him, and talked of "old times," of "days when they were boys together," and all the while he was planning this visit to Italia — damn him!

He forgot all about Italia's presence. With a sudden prophetic feeling he seemed looking straight ahead into the future. He could see exactly what would happen, such an old, old story; and to think that such misery could even come near Italia, his little playfellow, his little girl. If he had only known in time; if he had warned that strange lady when he spoke to her this morning, that would indeed have been fighting Gasparo with his own weapons! And then he remembered the tone of her voice when she spoke to him; to him, a man, not a girl thrown upon her mercy. "When the waves beat too fiercely against the shore the rock breaks them," she said. And he was to go away, he had sworn it, and it was in such hands that he was to leave the future of Italia!

He had been silent so long that she thought him very tired. Perhaps he was depressed, too, about this sudden change in his fortunes. His mother might have been finding fault with him; Italia was always a little afraid of the Sora

Catarina, who was associated in her mind with dark reproving looks and a generally grave and joyless view of life. It was always a matter of secret wonder to her when she heard her father allude to the days when Dino's mother had been a young and handsome girl. In her heart Italia could never imagine her looking otherwise than imperious and miserable. It seemed quite probable now that she should be the cause of Dino's look of unhappiness.

"I think you would be pleased to hear one thing," she said, gently. "Signor Gasparo was talking to me this morning about my father. You know the old Marchese always used to say that he should leave my father something in his will because of the service he did that night when the steamer was wrecked. You know, Dino; when we were children. And Signor Gasparo says that since his father forgot to put it into his will in writing, it makes no difference at all. He is going to speak to the lawyers and to the Signora Marchesa about it, and my father will have the money just the same. It is a great deal of money, three hundred francs, in gold. Father can buy a new boat with it — dear father! Are you not glad, Dino?" She was silent for a moment, and then, for the first time, a shadow came across her face. "I thought you would be so glad. That was half the pleas-

ure of it,—the telling you," she said rather wistfully.

"I *am* glad," Dino answered, in a harsh mechanical voice.

And then the blank look of disappointment on the sweet face bending over him struck him like a pang. He sat up, rubbing both hands over his head, and ruffling up his thick curly hair. "My Italia, you must know without my telling you if I am glad to hear of any good fortune coming to you or to Drea. But you must be patient with me this morning, *carina*. I have things to vex me; and I am very weary."

"Poor Dino! It is my fault for tiring you. But I will sing to you now. That will rest you better than anything else," she said soothingly, gazing down at him with frank, loving eyes.

Dino smiled faintly. This sudden reawakening of thought was like the clutch of a physical pain. "Sing to me with your guitar. That is more formal. It is more like making a stranger of me," he said, answering her look. As she moved away he shut his eyes, and buried his face again on his folded arm. The last hope was gone. After this what would be the use of warning Drea? The simple loyal-hearted old man was as incapable of tempering his gratitude for a gift with a criticism of the giver's motives as

the veriest child. His little store of wisdom held no formula for such a case. It would be next to impossible to make him believe in any form of treachery connected with the handsome, open-handed young master ; and, even if it were possible, Dino foresaw only too clearly what would be the first,— the immediate result. For had he not pledged himself to care for and protect Italia ? And what more natural than that her father should turn to him in this emergency ?

He lay so quiet that Italia believed him to be half asleep. She looked down at him two or three times as she sat there tuning her guitar ; but as he did not move she did not speak to him. Presently she began to sing.

She sang song after song ; odds and ends of old ballads ; love-catches such as the peasants sing to themselves while the sheep are grazing ; full rhythmical snatches of modern Greek she had learned from wandering sailors. She sang softly, *a mezza voce*, with an exquisite liquid tenderness in her voice, like the lowest notes of a brooding bird.

Once, as there came a sound of dripping oars, she broke off suddenly. A boat passed very near them, and she nodded with a smile to the stout man in the faded uniform who was seated in the bows.

“ What is it ? ” asked Dino, without lifting his

head,—he too had heard the sharp click of the rowlocks.

“Dino! are you awake? And I thought you were sleeping so sweetly. Did that boat wake you then? It was nothing; only the custom-house men rowing old Captain Piero home to get his dinner. See! there he is still waving his hand to me. I see him every day; he always passes at this hour.”

“But he does not always see you singing a visitor asleep,” said Dino, sitting up rather hastily and looking after the departed boat. “No, I was not dreaming, my Italia; unless it be a dream to feel one’s whole heart and soul full of you.” The words slipped out unintentionally; an instant later he would have given anything to recall them. He felt sure she had taken in their full meaning by the very silence which fell upon her. She sat absolutely motionless; he was sure of it, but he would not trust himself to look at her. He only added, in a tone which he tried to make quite impersonal, “I am afraid your Captain Piero will only have a poor opinion of my politeness. Do you think we could explain to him that I was not quite so insensible as I seemed?”

“I don’t know,” said Italia, rising and laying down the guitar. She moved away a few steps and stood leaning against the gray buttress, her

scarlet neck-handkerchief making a vivid spot of color there like a flower.

"I can see—I think I can see my father's boat," she said, bending forward and taking hold of the edge of the bridge's arch.

"Take care!"

Dino got up and went and stood beside her.

"Don't lean too far forward, dear. Is that Drea's boat? What eyes you have, my Italia! See, the wind is against her; she will have to come in on another tack."

The patched sail bent and dipped as he spoke. The boat seemed gliding away from them.

He looked down at her. They were standing so close together now he could see the quick rise and fall of her breath; the stirring of the wind in her roughened hair; the quivering shadow where the long lashes rested on her cheek.

One hand hung loosely by her side. He barely touched it, with fingers that trembled.

"Italia!"

What were resolutions or remembrance? All the world had faded away; there were no living presences now but himself and this girl beside him, and that far-off winged boat moving slowly toward them across the shining water. "My Italia?" She turned a radiant face towards him. The momentary shyness which had made her leave her place was gone now; there was only

left a deep look of rapture in the dark loving eyes.

"Yes, Dino. You *do* love me. I know it," she said simply. She did not change her expectant attitude; but she moved her hand until the little brown fingers clasped his.

They stood so for fully a minute without speaking, their eyes fixed on the approaching boat. "And you love me too, Italia? You will say that you love me?" Dino said in a half whisper. He had not meant to say this. He had resolved not to say it; but what was the good of prudence now? The patched sail was drawing nearer; there was only this one moment left in which fearfully to snatch at perfect joy. He held his breath lest she should delay to speak.

But Italia answered him with grave simplicity. There was not the shadow of a doubt in her heart, not a cloud upon her heaven of content. Perhaps they had never been farther apart, these two, in all their sensations, than at this first moment of supreme understanding.

"I do love you," she said, in her clear, full voice. And then at the sound of her own words she started; Dino felt the movement of her fingers in his; her eyes filled with happy tears, and the color swept in a quick wave over her pale face and throat. "I think I have always loved you—after my father,—always, since I was a little girl, my Dino," she said softly.

"Only — after your father, Italia?"

She hesitated ; but he had asked his question an instant too late, for now the wind had really caught the flapping sail of the *Bella Maria* ; they could see the quick movement of old Drea's hand on the tiller, and hear his voice calling out an order to Maso. In another moment the two men had brought the old brown boat cleverly alongside. Dino made a quick catch at the rope that was flung to him ; there was a momentary struggle of strong-armed Maso with the heavy sail.

"Well, lad," said Drea, standing up at his place by the helm and looking about him. "Well, my little girl!"

"Was it a good morning's work, father?"

"Mah! . . . I've seen worse days, child, I've seen worse days. Mind what you are about with those nets, you Maso! That's right, lad; give him a hand. We wanted another man with us, but I've seen worse hauls for all that. You'll be ready to go out with us to-night, eh, Dino?"

"Yes, Sor Drea."

"Ay, ay. You'd have come with us this morning fast enough, I'm thinking, but the girl there would n't hear of my sending for you. 'He has had a hard day ; he will be so tired, father,' she said. Tired! *Santissima Vergine!* and she a sailor's daughter!" The old man chuckled, straightening his back and rubbing his stiffened

shoulder joints. "But, bless you, they're all alike, and even one's own daughter is a woman. Women! they'll pray all day for rain, and be frightened the first minute they see a cloud in the sky.— You'll get your dinner here, Maso."

Maso, a broad-backed young fellow in a blue jacket, looked up from the wet heap of nets with a smile which showed all his white teeth. "Ay, Sor Drea."

"And I must be off home," said Dino, looking at Italia.

"Ay, lad. You'll stay another time likely. There won't be too much dinner to-day for three of us," the fisherman said simply, "and Maso has earned his share. The chestnut is for the man who takes its shell off: that's my way o' thinking."

"I could not stop in any case; thanking you kindly all the same, Sor Drea. I told my mother I'd be back to dinner. By the way, I was to ask you if it is all settled about our going up there?" he nodded in the direction of Monte Nero.

"Ay, ay. 'T is settled for Sunday fast enough. Sora Catarina has only to get herself ready. We might have had worse luck, Maso; we might have had worse luck. 'T was stiffish work with only two of us," old Drea said, sitting down on the edge of the platform with his feet in the boat to light his pipe. "*Mah! . . . che volete?*

There's nothing like the day after a storm for finding out the color o' the bottom o' things. There's good in every wind that blows, lad, for a man who knows how to set his sail."

He thrust a heap of the wet shining fish aside with his foot.

"When there's not so many o' the big there's more o' the little. You know what I'm always telling you. The Devil himself, *con rispetto par-lendo*, the Devil himself has a curly tail."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INCIDENTAL.

THERE was a letter waiting at home for Dino. "It stands there on the dresser; give it to your brother, child. One of Lucia's little nephews brought it, maybe half an hour after you were gone," Sora Catarina said.

"It was Beppi brought it, Dino. He came with it on his way to school. He likes going to school; I asked him, and he said, 'Yes.' Mother, why don't I go to school? I wish I went to school," said Palmira, in a complaining tone.

"School indeed! and a nice place you would find it, *bambina mia*. Nay, you be content to stay where you are looked after and get plenty to eat. Gesu Maria! 't is all very well for such as Lucia's *nipotini*, poor children,—'t will maybe take their minds off their hunger, learning to read. But learning's a poor sauce to empty plates in my opinion."

"Does n't Beppi have anything to eat but empty plates?" asked Palmira, opening wide

her eyes. She added, after a moment's reflection, "But you gave him some white bread to-day, mother. I saw you do it."

"Nay, eat your dinner, child, and talk afterwards. Don't you see your brother is reading?" said Sora Catarina, in a lowered tone, passing her two hands over the little girl's hair under pretence of adjusting her pinafore.

The letter was from Valdez. All the time he had spent in walking home Dino had been thinking of Valdez, planning about him, rehearsing in his own mind the words of some wild appeal which was to free him once for all from the intolerable burden laid upon his life. Last night seemed so far away. He had passed through a whole world of emotion since then. He had put Italia between himself and his promises to those men; he had made himself responsible for her happiness, and it was impossible, even Valdez with all his fanaticism must see that,—it was impossible *she* should be made to suffer for him. Out-of-doors there, looking at Maso's good-natured simple face, with old Drea's cheery voice in his ears, it had somehow seemed such an easy, natural thing that matters should arrange themselves. But this note was like a death-warrant. Before he opened it he knew there was no hope: the shadow had closed around him.

There were but three lines, —

"I have reason to fear we are watched. Do not try to see, or communicate with, me until you hear again. Be prudent and patient: you will hear in good time. The child who brings this lives in my house, and is a safe messenger."

There was no signature.

Dino crushed the note up in his hand with an impulse of personal enmity. He turned away from the window and took his seat at the table without a word, but no effort of self-control could keep his lips from turning white, or alter the fixed look of pain about his eyes.

"The letter was from Pietro Valdez, surely? Was it bad news, *figliuolo*? What has happened, in the name of all the blessed saints!" said Sora Catarina, clasping her hands and looking at him.

He made an effort to smile as he said, "Nothing, mother; it's nothing. Valdez only writes to say I shall not see him; he will be busy for a day or two."

"And is it not seeing that man could make your face go the color of a piece of linen bleaching in the sun? Nay, *figliuolo mio*, I am not one of those people who think they are seeing through a wall when all the time they are looking at their own reflections in a looking-glass. 'T is nothing an old man could write you would

turn your face that color." She lowered her voice. "Tell me the truth, Dino. You have been having a quarrel with Italia?"

"No, indeed, mother," said Dino, pushing away his plate and standing up. He could not swallow the food before him. He could see that his mother was not convinced by his denial, but it was easier to leave her under any delusion rather than to submit longer to the worry of a cross-examination. He took refuge in saying, "I am not well; my head aches. I don't want any dinner. I shall go and lie down."

"Yes, my Dino, yes. Lie down. *Santissima Vergine*, that it may not be the fever!" said Sora Catarina, crossing herself devoutly.

She kept going to the door of his room to look at him at intervals all the afternoon. About six o'clock Maso called with a long message from old Drea. The Marchese Gasparo had hired the boat for a three days' trip to Viareggio. If Dino was coming, he was to be ready immediately: the wind was fair, and Drea proposed to start before seven. "He said I was to tell you the boat would be back on Saturday night, in time for Monte Nero," Maso concluded, looking carefully into the crown of his hat and shaking it, as though to assure himself that he had forgotten there no part of his commission.

He waited for Dino at the door, and they

walked down to the pier together. Gasparo was standing smoking a cigar at the head of the steps under a gas-lamp. He nodded cheerfully to Dino. "That's right, old fellow. Glad you are coming," he said. The two men were with him whom Dino had seen at the door of the "Giappone" that morning.

They seemed to have many friends at Viareggio. The *Bella Maria* was kept in constant readiness, for there was no telling at what hour a message might not come down from some neighboring villa, to be followed shortly by a company of pleasure-seekers bound for a sail. On one occasion Dino saw a face he knew among the cloaked and furred figures whom Gasparo was handing so carefully on board.

There was an unsteady wind that afternoon, and the boat was heavily laden: it was some time before Dino could look away from his task of watching the uncertain half-filled sails, but when at last the breeze struck them fully and the *Bella Maria* ran out of harbor on a long smooth tack, he could not resist his wish to see if he too had been recognized.

The Contessa must have been watching him, for the moment he turned his head their eyes met. He took off his woollen cap hastily, without speaking. She kept her dark eyes fixed steadily upon him for a moment.

" You have taken my advice, then ? This is wiser than building barricades," she said in a low voice.

She looked as if she might have added something more, but at that moment Gasparo, who was sitting beside her sheltering her from the sun by holding up her parasol,—Gasparo leaned forward and repeated some remark.

The Contessa laughed. " You think so, *vraiment*? It is not my experience. I find it is not only the virtues which require a certain elbow-room in which comfortably to expand. Some people fight against their own selfishness in this world, but mostly they fight the selfishness of their neighbors."

" And why not? After all, it's other people's selfishness that one objects to," said Gasparo gaily.

" And that is only out of disinterestedness," struck in another man, who had not yet spoken. " You are too severe upon us, Contessa. One never tires of virtue."

She lifted her delicate eyebrows inquiringly.

" Well—not of other people's virtue: one tires of one's own perhaps."

" But it's so seldom one has the chance of *that*," added Gasparo lightly, pulling with one hand at the fringe of the big parasol. He had distinctly heard what had been said to Dino; but

now, as his eye rested upon him, he nodded in a half-careless, half-friendly manner. "She's going better now. We shall get more wind beyond the breakwater, eh, lad?"

"Yes, sir," said Dino, putting on his cap again and going forward to coil away a loose rope.

Everything he had noticed in the last day or two made him feel safer about Gasparo. The young Marchese was an excellent sailor; he was absorbed in his present amusement; the two young men had not exchanged a word unconnected with the management of the boat.

Those three last days had seemed to Dino to pass like a dream. After his sedentary habits of life between the four walls of an office, the mere fact of being always out-of-doors and always actively employed would have sufficed to change all his impressions. He was intoxicated with fresh air, with sunlight, and the exhilarating sense of energetic work. "There's no life like it, lad; no life like it," old Drea told him more than once. "Other men may make a better living, I'm not denying it; but to be content with what one gets in this world is to be the master of it. When you're as old as I am you'll find that you can't put one foot in two shoes, boy; it's a good plan to know what you want and be contented with it when you've got it, — a rare good plan."

"If only wanting were enough to get it," said Dino bitterly.

"Lad, lad! *Bisogna dar tempo al tempo*—give time time enough to work in. But you youngsters are all alike; you expect to smell fried fish before the nets are even cast into the water."

"That 'ud be a poor look-out for supper," observed silent Maso with a grin.

"What! were *you* listening to what I was saying? Then I'm bound you'll be whistling for a wind before long, my boy;—you know the old saying, when you see a donkey listening it's a sign the weather is changing," retorted old Drea, shifting his pipe in his mouth and giving vent to a dry chuckle.

But presently, as Maso moved away, Dino looking up found the old man's keenly-inquiring glance fixed full upon him.

"We've known each other a good many years, and each of us knows pretty well what timber the other's boat is built of. Without wasting breath, boy,—is there anything troubling you?"

Dino doubled up his fist and struck one of the rowlocks tighter into its place. "Oh! every one is more or less troubled," he said evasively.

"Ay; but there's a difference, there's a difference, boy. Little worries, Lord bless you! they're everywhere. And they're like a grain

o' sand in your eye, no use to any mortal man, out or in. But real trouble's a different thing. I'm not saying there's no use in it, or even that a man ought to hope to escape it ; it's only a fool would expect the wind always to be blowing from the same point o' the compass. And a real sorrow — an old sorrow — I've known it to act like ballast. It's heavy ; ay ; but it trims the boat. There's many a man would n't sail so straight about his day's work if there was n't some dead weight o' that sort at his heart to steady him."

He was silent for a moment, and then once more he looked with a kindly, affectionate glance at the young man's flushed and averted face. "I'm not asking for more than you want to tell, lad. When a real friend has got two eyes to look at you with, sometimes the best service he can do you is to keep one o' them shut. There's nothing easier than to sail when the right wind's blowing ; you'll tell me all about it fast enough when the time comes. *Andiamo ! coraggio, ragazzo !* It's a poor business looking at the sun with a cloudy face."

He gave a searching look at the horizon. "We'll be in in half an hour more if the wind holds — we'll have her snug in harbor before sunset. And then, hey ! for a clear sky to-morrow and a day at Monte Nero. To-morrow'll be the finest day we've had this week, and I'm

glad o't, I'm glad o't. I don't like having my little girl disappointed." He turned his head towards the sunny semicircle of houses of the distant city, "She'll be waiting there now to see us come in, *che Dio la benedica !*"

Dino, too, was secretly preoccupied with the prospect of that approaching meeting. He was the first to see her as they ran the long oars out to pull the boat in across the smooth water of the inner port. He saw her scarlet handkerchief, a spot of color a long way off beneath the shadow of the bridge. She was standing in the same place as when he had last seen her, and it was like a good omen that he should have been the first to discover her at that distance.

She spoke first of all to her father, but as she put her little hand into his Dino was exquisitely conscious of the quick tremor of joy which made her heart beat at his touch. There was irresistible delight in the mere fact of being near her. And there was no lack of brightness now in the face which turned towards her, or in the voice which wished her "Good-night!"

"Until to-morrow, Dino," she said, following him to the foot of the stone steps.

"*A domani, cara !*"

There was a bright fire and a welcome waiting for him in the old room at home. He stood before the blaze talking for several moments before

he crossed the room to look at the shelf above the dresser where the letters were put.

"Are you expecting anything? There are no letters for you, my Dino; no, not even one little letter. Are you sorry? Do you mind?" Palmira asked, rather anxiously.

He stooped to kiss her. "No, little one. I was only looking. I don't really want it at all," he said laughingly.

It seemed like another good omen that there should be no news from Valdez.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ON THE WAY UP.

THE small stone-paved piazza of Monte Nero was crowded with men, women, and children, gathered together for the yearly pilgrimage of the Madonna. On one side of the square a flight of stone steps led up to the door of the church : the heavy leather curtain was rolled up half its length and fastened back to be out of the way of the coming procession ; and massive wreaths of flowers and fruit swung from cornice to cornice above the open door. It was too early in the year as yet for many bright-colored flowers, but the wreaths were white with the bloom of the first almond trees that had blossomed, and long rows of ripe oranges and lemons, threaded like beads upon a cord, were fastened in festoons about the old gray stones. The gold and softest pinky white looked very pretty hanging high up in the afternoon sunlight above the heads of the people.

It wanted a good hour and a half yet to the

time appointed for the procession, and the café which stood on the opposite side of the square, and the open-air booths which clustered about its lower end, were alike full of eager, laughing, pushing, hungry holiday-making folk. The most correct place to be recognized in by one's friends was, doubtless, at one of those small green tables in the shade in front of the *caffettiere's*; but for that matter there were people enough everywhere, people all over the place, not to mention the two constant streams, one ascending and one returning, up and down, the worn old steps of the church. These were composed for the most part of women, leading small, dressed-up children by the hand. The men were content to wait outside until the church bell itself should put an indisputable end to the little friendly glasses of bitter vermouth and the gossip. They stood about in groups, a sunburned hardy lot of fishermen and sailors, for the Santissima Madonna of Monte Nero is known to be the especial friend and patron of seafaring men; the church is crowded with votive offerings, rude pictures of sinking barks and drowning men, and always, in the corner, the glorified vision of the Virgin descending upon the waters to bless and save. The ceilings of some of the side chapels are completely hidden from view by rows of these representations.

Monte Nero itself can hardly be said to deserve its name of a mountain, being nothing in fact but a high grass-grown hill, rising behind the city of Leghorn and commanding a superb view of the sea. Near the top the country presents the appearance of a succession of grassy downs, across which a narrow path takes a short cut from the winding carriage-road to the summit, and at this particular moment Lucia and Italia were walking hand in hand along this pathway, while Dino followed on the grass at Italia's side. The old people had remained in the *carretella* with Palmira.

"I don't think much of your plan of chartering a ship to get out before the voyage is half over, children. But do as you like, *ragazzi*, do as you like. What, you too, Lucia? Nay, I gave you credit for more sense than that, my woman. You'll not find Sora Catarina here getting out of a comfortable carriage to walk up a devil of a hill."

"But Lucia is perfectly right. Some one must go with Italia. It would not look well if she were to be met walking alone with a young man," interposed Sora Catarina very decidedly.

"E-e-h, *buon anima mia*, the scandal would be bigger than the sin."

Catarina looked at him a little scornfully. "You were different once; long ago. I wonder

if there is *anything* that you would really trouble yourself about now, Andrea?"

"Well, there's my little girl. There is n't much else, I suppose," said Drea good-naturedly. "You know the saying we have, we sailors,—a wide shoe and a full belly, and take the storms as they come. That's my way of thinking."

"Ah," murmured Catarina, drawing her shawl more closely about her.

They had been young together, these two. Catarina could remember a time when to be alone with her, as now, would have been the measure of happiness to the hopeful, ardent young lover whom the slow years had changed into this weather-beaten old man. To a woman's eyes there is always an atmosphere of youth left about any man who has made love to her, no matter how the years have passed since then. And it made no difference to her secret feeling of reproachfulness that she herself had perhaps much to answer for in this general lowering of Andrea's estimate of life. A woman betrays and remembers where a man betrays and forgets. And at that particular moment faithfulness seemed to Catarina to sum up all the virtues.

In autumn the morning freshness of the wood lingers late: there is something of the coolness of the dawn in the pine shadows long after the fruitful warmth has fallen upon the fields. And

in some natures, growing old, there is left somewhat of this same touch of virginal freshness and charm. I think it is oftenest the case with women who have been unhappy in their youth,— who have missed the placid midsummer fruition of content. They bear in their hearts an eternal unsatisfied belief in the spring.

She looked at Italia and Dino walking away across the sunny grass slopes : it seemed not so many years since she too had been walking there, going on the same errand to the same old church. She watched them with eyes grown bitter with a dreary sense of loss : it was like watching the mocking phantom of her own youth.

But to them the day seemed lengthening out into uncounted hours of pleasure. The sky was cloudless. The spring wind blowing over their faces held a magic of its own. "Come and walk on the grass, Sora Lucia. Never mind the path,— there is no place in the world like these downs. The air changes as it blows over the grass ; it is like some one breathing ; like a breath that comes and goes," said Dino, taking off his hat and turning to face the wind.

"Look at the sea now. How far it is below us," said Italia, stopping too and looking back.

"What a sea-bird it is," he said, meeting

her eyes with a smile of happy confidence. "What would you do if you had to live inland, Italia?"

"Oh, I could not do it. I should stifle. I am always thirsty where I cannot hear the sound of the waves."

"How can you possibly tell where you may have to live, *figlia mia*? It is true one does not go away from one's own town if one can help it; but a girl before she is married is like a bit of thistle-down, who can tell which way the wind will blow her?" asked Lucia in her subdued voice. She, too, was dressed for the festa, and her neat black gown contrasted with the blue and scarlet of the girl's holiday dress, much in the same fashion as her thin face, with its unvarying look of decent disappointment, served as a background for the young radiance of the face by her side. "How can you tell whom your father will wish you to marry? It might be some one who came from a long way off,—like Dino's friend, the Signor Valdez, who lodges in our house. He comes from a country where they do not speak Italian, for all he looks so like a Christian."

"I have not seen old Valdez lately," Dino began.

If he wished to ask any questions Lucia spared him the trouble.

"He is a kind man that,— the blessed saints reward him," she said, with a sudden fervor. "And to think how long it took us to find it out,— and the world is hard enough, God knows, without one shutting one's mouth the days it rains comfits. But, *via!* we knew he was a stranger from over sea. What would you? when he said '*buon giorno*' or '*felicissima notte*' as one passed him on the stairs, it was like a bear growling; it did not sound like real Italian. Many and many a day have I gone away to my work with the old *nonna* locked in our room, and my heart in my mouth, not knowing if it were better to leave her there, with all the children, and not a soul to go near them in case of fire. And me never so much as dreaming of asking Signor Pietro to stop sometimes when he passed the door to give them a look. Ah, he is a good heart, he is. And as for his never speaking, well, there's evil talking enough in the world, God knows! a man can do worse things with his tongue than keep it quiet. As for those children, they are fairly bewitched; there's that Beppi, he follows Signor Pietro about like his shadow. It's Signor Pietro who pays now for his schooling, and such a bright lad as it is! You should have seen him the other day when Signor Pietro told him first about his going off on a journey. Nothing would

content the boy but bringing back his geography book from the school to show the *nonna* all the places."

"Does—does Pietro talk of going away, then?" asked Dino, his heart beating faster.

"See that, now! and you such friends. But I always knew that Signor Pietro could keep his own counsel. Perhaps it's a way they have over there in the countries he comes from. Yes, he is going away. To Pisa first, and then perhaps to Rome. He says he wants a holiday, and no wonder. *Cose lunghe diventan serpe*,—drag a thing out long enough and it becomes like a snake. And it's two years or more since he has had a day's outing from Leghorn."

They had been sitting down to rest on the short dry turf as she talked, but now, as they rose to climb the last shoulder of the hill, her sharp black eyes were turned scrutinizingly upon Italia. She gave some slight ejaculation of surprise. "*Vergine Santissima!* Italia, you have lost your ring,—your beautiful ring. What a misfortune! *Madonna mia*, what a misfortune!"

Italia blushed scarlet. "No, I have not lost it. I did not put it on," she answered hurriedly. And then, after a moment's consideration, "Old things are best," she said in her sweet, full voice; "I did not want a new gift,—I told my father

I did not want it. He will keep it for me, he will give it to me to wear when I am married."

"And you will wear it that day, my Italia?" asked Dino, looking at her and speaking in a very low tone, yielding yet this once more to the perilous delight of saying what he would have said, what he would have had the right to say, if only he could have hoped to escape from all the consequences of his past actions. The instinctive conviction that this proposed journey of Valdez was in some way connected with the disposal of his own future gave Dino a still more intense longing to grasp at present happiness. He knew that he was acting ungenerously; yet, as the girl turned her face shyly towards him, her red silk handkerchief tied about her head in peasant fashion made a soft shade about her temples and her little ears, coming down in front in a bright silken fold across her low forehead, hiding all her hair, and giving an almost oriental look to the dark straight eyebrows and the dark lustrous eyes. The wind and the sun had brought a soft pink color into her pale oval-shaped cheeks.

She was really looking very beautiful as she said: "Why make plans for the future, my Dino? Surely we are very happy; we do not want things to change. The old things *are* the best. Why, even this pilgrimage to-day,— one

would always care to come, of course, just to show the Holy Mother that one is grateful—but it would be so different, it would be so sad, if we were to forget the other years that went before. This is the happiest year of them all, I know; yet I should not like not to have the memory of the times we have been here as little children. I like the old gate there at the top because that is the spot where we have always waited; I could open it myself quite easily, but I like to remember the days when it seemed to me wonderful that you could unfasten the lock. It is like that picture of my father's shipwreck,—you know, Dino,—the *ex voto* up there in the chapel. When I was a child I believed it had all happened exactly like that. Now I know it was painted by a man who has never even seen my father, but it makes no difference. I could never care for a fine new picture as I do for the old one."

"*Anima mia!*!" said Dino passionately, bending a little towards her, as she stood, leaning with folded hands against the old wooden gate. When she ceased speaking there was something almost childlike in the serene unconcern of her face. But there was nothing hard, nothing self-engrossed, in this *insouciance* of Italia. It was merely the expression of a nature accustomed to a large and frank acceptance of daily life,—a

genuine indifference to petty devices. This fisherman's daughter, in her little cotton frock, had something in her of the wide-eyed serenity of an elder world; she had inherited from her father something of his cordial simplicity—"a princely disregard of little things."

It was only a minute or so before the *carretta* overtook them by the gate: they all entered the crowded piazza together.

The three women hurried away to look after the room which had been promised them for their night's lodging, but only a very few minutes were passed before they too were back in the piazza, for now the bells, which had been silent all the afternoon, were pealing together with a short and merry stroke. The procession was about to begin.

Inside the dusky church there was an unwonted shuffling of little feet; a wavering of lights clutched by uncertain little hands; an anxious movement to and fro of black-robed *frati*, marshalling and adjusting the unruly lines of brown and flaxen heads. It was the children's part of the procession; and more than one woman in the crowd felt her heart swell and her eyes grow moist as she watched them, *poveri angeli!* A long broken line of small human creatures, in brightest holiday dress, and each with its burning taper, following the great

golden Cross as it passed solemnly, borne on men's shoulders, out of the gloomy aisles, out under the wreaths of spring blossom, and down the steps into the warm afternoon light. That was perhaps the prettiest sight of all, as the twinkling tapers grew dim in the sunshine. And then came rows of young white-robed choristers, and the impassive faces of the officiating priests ; the low sunlight burned like a jewel upon the tinselled stoles, and the reds and purples of the vestments were vivid and deep like the color of garden flowers. The blue cloud of incense rose straight up, with scarcely a waver above the bent heads of the kneeling crowd, as the Blessed Sacrament was slowly carried around the piazza. The afternoon was windless, and the people so hushed, that even from the farther side of the square the priests' solemn chanting was distinctly audible, and the warning tinkle of the bell.

The last to descend the steps were a white-robed company of Brethren of the Misericordia, with masked faces, and hands hidden away under the long folds of their garments. They passed like a little company of the sheeted and forgotten dead, between the gay ranks of the holiday-makers ; and, as they emerged from the shadows, the bells rang joyously overhead, a peal which set them rocking from side

to side, in a visible triumph, in the old open belfry.

This was a sign that the procession was ended. There was an instant rush for the now empty church; there was just time to visit the holy pictures before supper, and if one had any especial prayer to offer, why, it was but natural to expect a little prompter attention from the saints, who might easily be supposed to be still looking down approvingly upon what was going on in their honor.

Drea and his party were among the first to re-enter the shadowy portal. There was scarcely light enough now in the side-chapels to distinguish any unfamiliar object, but the old fisherman walked straight to where his own *ex voto* offering had hung these many years.

"Ah! that *was* a night, if you like; that *was* a night to remember!"

"Were you frightened, father?" said Italia, speaking in a whisper, not to disturb the people kneeling all about them, and asking the same question she had asked in this same place, at every recurring festa of the Blessed Madonna, since the first time she had been brought there, a small wide-eyed creature clinging to her father's hand.

"Nay, child, nay. It 'ud be a poor business if one's courage did not hold fast in the right place.

It 'ud be like fastening one's boat up with a rotten cable, there 'd be no depending upon anything then. But it *was* a night, that. A man who does n't live at sea does n't know the meaning of a prayer. Not that we had much time for speaking ; but it seemed to come natural to think of the Holy Virgin then,— just as I thought of you, sleeping in your little bed."

He looked at the picture again. "Ay. We brought off the men and a fine bit of salvage ; I mind me how pleased the old master was when I went up to the Villa to tell him about it. He was in his bed, I remember, and he wore a thing with a frill round his face, like a woman's night-cap. He was finely pleased. Everybody used to say he was going to leave me something in his will — something over and above my wages — as a sort of thank you. Your mother used to count upon it, poor soul ! and so did I for a bit, — I should have taken it kindly of the old master, I should, if he had remembered it at the last. We knew each other many a year."

Dino and Italia exchanged a meaning glance.

"And if it were to come now, father? that would be better still ; you could get a new boat," she said, with a smile of irrepressible pleasure.

"Nay, child, the will was proven long ago. If there was ever any money coming to me — and the old master used to say there was, he used to

say so — it stuck in the lawyers' hands years ago, like a boat aground. It never made any difference in my way o' remembering the old master. It would be but a poor look-out if one could serve the same master faithfully for twenty years, — and I so used to him, knowing just what he meant when he swore the loudest, — it 'ud be but a poor look-out if it only meant losing one's liking at the end of it. 'T is a weak friendship that's so ready to call for the blessed sacraments at the first little knock on the head ; — that's my way o' thinking."

It was growing dusk, outside as well as in, when they left the dim church, with its smell of fresh crushed bay-leaves underfoot mingling with the stale incense smoke, in a way which always carried Dino's memory back to very early days, when his father was still a trifle undecided about the exact relations of Church and State, and not unwilling to give his little boy the treat of staring at the lighted candles of the festa. The remembrance of his dead father's face rose vividly before him, and he lingered for an instant behind the others at the door, looking back.

As he hurried on to rejoin Italia old Drea touched him on the shoulder. "The women will go to bed early, but I want you to come out a bit with me after supper, lad. I want to have a talk with you," he said.

## CHAPTER X.

BY THE LIGHT OF A TORCH.

THEY came out of their lodging, an hour later, into the deserted square. Lights were flaring in nearly every window, and in every house was to be heard the rattling of bottles and plates, and men's voices calling for more wine. But it was quiet enough out here, under the stars, in the empty piazza, where the last booths were being closed for the night.

They strolled over to the lower part of the square, and sat down upon the parapet ; Drea was lighting his pipe.

"Look here, lad," he began abruptly. The match in his hand went out, he felt for another in all his pockets, swearing the while at the mischance.

"May the devil fly away with all fine clothes, say I. For why should a man change his coat any more than his skin ? I 've worn this jacket every festa for the last twelve years, and I never yet could learn the trick o' its inside."

"I 've got lights," said Dino.

"Nay, lad, where there's a way out there's a way in. I'll not be beat by it, thanking you kindly."

He puffed at his pipe thoughtfully before he spoke again.

"It's a good many years now since the first time I came up here. Lord, how the years go ! I mind me — Your mother was a young woman then, Dino ; no older than my little girl there, and I was a wild young fellow. Well, well ; it seems more than one lifetime ago. I'm getting to be an old man now, my Dino. It gave me a start the other night to hear our young master speak of it, but it's true enough for all that."

"Perhaps it is. But you never seem old to me, Sor Drea."

"I've had my turn at it, lad ; I can't complain. But maybe the Captain was right about my settling down ; maybe he was right. I don't suppose I can be far off sixty. The old master lived to be seventy-two, he did ; but then he lived like a wax image packed in cotton wool. And when a man's knocking about day and night, why, Death needs no lantern to find him."

He took his pipe out of his mouth and looked at it.

"There isn't much to leave behind me, lad. Only the old boat, and Italia. She'll miss me,

will my little girl. She's wonderful fond of her old father. But you'll look after her ; you'll be good to her, Dino ? ”

There was no answer.

“ You see, it is n't as if I were leaving her to strangers. But I've been fond o' you, boy, since you were that high ; when you used to come to play with her in the old boat, and I used to sit and watch you and wish I had a little curly-headed chap like you, that 'ud grow up and help me about the nets. My girl's a good girl ; but a boy 'ud have been different.”

He was silent for a moment ; then he put his pipe back into his mouth and gave a slight chuckle. “ There's no basket without its handle ; that's sure enough. I've got 'em both now, girl and boy too. I was an old fool not to have thought of it sooner ; but it's difficult to see that the children have grown up, when you remember them so high. Well, lad, I give you joy, I do. She's very fond o' you. There's only one thing I want to speak to you about. It's all plain sailing before you then.”

“ And what is that ? ” asked Dino, very quietly.

His face was in shadow, but there was that in his voice which startled the old man with a foreboding of coming trouble. He leaned forward, peering anxiously into the darkness.

"Eh? what's that, lad, what's that you're saying?"

"You say there is one thing you wish to speak to me about before — before I can be affianced to Italia. I ask you what it is."

"Nay, my Dino, I said nought about being affianced, if that's what's troubling you. Not but what I could easily find another husband for her: there's Maso, now; as honest a lad as ever hauled at a rope, and a good bit o' money too, all in the bank. But what does that matter? I've never promised her to you; but it would be but a poor sort o' friendship that only depended upon words. I've done more than give you my promise, lad; I've trusted you, I have."

"Good God!" said Dino, under his breath, looking up with blank eyes at the clear starlit sky above him.

"There's no need for many words to settle it." He hesitated; and then went on with sudden fluency as if the long meditated speech were forcing its own way out. "See here, lad. It's not so much more than a week since you lost your place because o' that infernal tomfoolery of a procession. I'm not casting it up at you, my boy; not I. But there 't is; you made a mistake. It might have been a worse one, for you meant no harm, and as things go it's all turned

out for the best. I would n't have cared to marry my little girl to a writing fellow, and you've got the make of a sailor in you, lad ; I always said it. When God Almighty shuts one door in an honest man's face, if you look about you you'll see He 's opened another. But it might ha' turned out different."

He lowered his voice, and added : "I don't blame you, but I've kept my ears open, and there are things said about you that I don't like ; I don't like. When a man lets his net down to the bottom he 's sure to catch mud. I saw your father do it. *He* called himself a republican too. You must give it up, my Dino."

"I can't do that," said Dino, in a very low voice.

The words implied so much to himself that he could scarcely believe in the reality of things — he felt involved in the fantastic irony of a dream — when Drea burst out laughing, good-naturedly.

"Why, lad, you don't understand me ? Where are your wits ? I am speaking Italian, *mi pare*. It is n't to oblige *me* I want you to give up that confounded club of yours, and all the nonsense that goes with it. It 's so that you can marry Italia. Why, lad, one would think that I was torturing you instead of telling you how to marry your sweetheart. *You* one o' those

damned radical rogues, my Dino, the little chap I taught how to handle an oar? Come, come, lad, drop the nonsense. It's being shut up between four walls that put it into you, I'll go bail. Politics! Lord bless you! a capful o' wind will soon blow 'em out of you. They're like weevils in a biscuit, they eat all the good; you can't get rid o' them too quickly."

"Drea, it is you who will not understand. You are unjust; you have always been unjust to my father. But his ideas are mine. I will not—" he stopped, with a horrible sense of sinking at his heart. What were these ideas to which he professed himself so willing to sacrifice all the rest? But it was imperatively necessary to make Drea understand the situation. "I cannot give up my—my convictions. For no reason in the world. Not even to marry Italia."

There was an instant of terrible silence.

"Are you mad, boy?" demanded Drea, in a sort of subdued growl.

"I am not mad," Dino answered.

It was a relief to look forward to an explosion of the old man's anger; anything — anything rather than that tone of affectionate trust.

"I am not mad. I don't know why I'm not. I'm unhappy enough for that, or for anything else," he said, wearily.

“Unhappy — !”

The old man checked himself, breathing hard.

One of the last vendors of cakes and sweet-meats had gone, leaving his torch of tarred stick to flare itself away in the empty piazza. Drea sat rigid, his eyes fixed upon that spot of light. But he was too deeply moved to keep quiet: the old habit of affection was strong upon him; it was stronger than his pride. “I would not have believed it of you, Dino. But you ’ll think better of it, lad; you ’ll think better of it. One thinks that one has only to pick and choose in life when one is young. When a boat is running straight before the wind any fool can steer her. Later on you begin to find out that things have their own consequences; you might as well ask for a fish without its bones as for a life without trouble. I did n’t expect this, though. If it were anybody but you, lad; you that I ’ve knowed from a boy.”

“I — I can’t stand this,” said Dino, huskily.

He got up to his feet and walked away a few paces. The old man followed him.

“Lad! — ”

He laid his heavy hand upon Dino’s shoulder. “’T is easier to make wounds than to heal ’em. I don’t want to be hard on you, God knows. I ’ll give you another chance, lad. Perhaps you ’ve

gone too far with those scoundrels to break off short i' this way — without with your leave or by your leave. Perhaps I was unreasonable to expect it. For the devil shows a man plain enough how to get into a mess like that, but he leaves him to steer his own way out. You might feel it upon your honor not to break wi' them without a word o' warning ; and honor's a delicate stuff, if you handle it you soil it in the touching. I've been an old fool ; I ought to have thought of all that sooner. But I'll give you another chance, lad. Look here. We'll let things stay as they are for the present. I won't keep you from seeing her ; and I'll give you three months' time to free yourself from all this black business. *Perdio !* 'tis a fair offer. Promise me that in three months you will come and ask me for Italia, and there's my hand on it. Why, lad, I could n't have trusted my little girl to any man but you." He spoke in the old cordial voice again, with a cheery ring in the brave words.

" Oh my God," said Dino, turning away from him, " what am I to do to make this man understand ? "

Andrea's arm fell to his side. He groaned, and put up his other hand to his forehead as if he had received a blow. " It can't be, lad — I tell you it *can't* be," he said in a broken voice.

A party of holiday-makers came out of a house at some distance, crossing the piazza at its farther end. The women were laughing and chattering as they went by. A young man called loudly for silence, and began to play the refrain of a love-song upon his mandoline. The swift, audacious tripping of the music came back to them from a long distance through the stillness of the night, and then again all was quiet.

Andrea took a quick step forward. He seized the blazing remnant of the torch from its hole in the wall, and waved it suddenly before Dino's eyes. The young man gave an involuntary start backwards.

"Oh, don't be frightened," said Drea, with an odd laugh, "I am only looking at your face. I feel as if I had never seen it properly. I want to remember the look of a man who cares more for the good opinion of a pack o' lying scoundrels than he cares for his oldest friends; a man who could teach my girl to love him; who could steal her heart from her; who could bear to look on at all her pretty little ways, and she all the while not knowing. I'm an old man, and perhaps I don't understand," he said, with bitter simplicity. "But I have lived sixty years in this world, and I've been honest. I never betrayed a trust."

He let the torch fall on the stones between

them. The light shone full upon his white hair.

"I loved you like my son, Dino. I would not change places with you to-night."

As he turned away Dino sprang forward with some passionate inarticulate ejaculation of despair. "Andrea! — Drea — don't, don't leave me like this. Drea! you are the oldest, the best friend I've ever had ; you can't believe. You must be mad not to see how I love her — "

The old man half paused, then shook his hand with a gesture of disbelief.

"If it had been anybody but *you*, lad — you, that I've knowed from a boy — "

He entered the darkened house, shutting the door behind him.

It had only taken a few minutes ; the voices of the women were still audible, and the sound of the mandoline.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LA MORT DANS L'ÂME.

THE masses of the downs were gray and shadowy ; there was only a faint streak of red in the eastern sky, and the whitened stones of the piazza had that peculiar look of stillness which transfigures familiar places seen at early dawn, when Dino came out of the house in which he had spent the night.

The cool sweet air tasted pleasantly to his feverish lips ; he stood bareheaded for a moment, drawing in a long deep breath of freshness before he struck into the path which was to lead him back to Leghorn. But early as it was, there was already some one stirring before him. As he passed the church a slender figure wrapped in a dark shawl moved hastily forward from behind one of the pillars, and a trembling voice said, “Dino !”

He started as if he had been shot.

“Italia ! Italia ! *you* there — at this hour !”

He sprang up the steps towards her, and they met just under the fading wreaths of yesterday’s festival.

They stood there grasping both one another's hands ; it was difficult to say which face looked the paler and more agitated.

"I wanted to speak to you," she said presently, without lifting her eyes to his. "Sora Catarina told me you would have to go back to town at daybreak —"

"Yes ?" he said, after waiting for a moment.

"I had something to say to you. Because I — I was sitting by the window last night, — it was so hot in there, — and I heard —"

" You heard ?"

She drew her hands away from him very gently.

"Don't you see, Dino, that I know it all ? I heard what you and my father said."

He caught hold of one of her hands again, and grasped it between both his own. "Italia ! — oh, my poor child, my poor little girl, to think that you should have heard that ! You know I did not mean to hurt you, dear. You know, Italia ! you do know, that I love you."

A wave of color passed over her white cheek. Her eyelids trembled, but she did not look at him.

"I heard — what you said," she repeated in a very low voice.

He pressed her hand more tightly.

"Italia — I —"

The utter hopelessness of it all overcame him; the impossibility of explaining anything. His fingers relaxed; he turned away and leaned against one of the rough stone columns. "You are quite right. There is no reason why you should believe me. But I thought you would," he said, with a burst of passionate despair.

A quiver passed over her face as he released her hands; she drew them under her shawl, and stood facing him. It was a moment of horrible suffering to Dino before she spoke.

"I do believe you. Please do not be unhappy about that. I cannot understand it—altogether; but I do believe you—Dino," she answered gently. She hesitated a little in speaking, and her voice faltered over his name. She added more firmly: "That is what I wanted to say to you. Please do not be unhappy about me. My father—my father wanted you to say that you would give up other things, things you care for, for my sake. But I do not wish it. I only want you to do what is best; what will make you more happy."

"Happy!" echoed Dino with a groan.

"Yes, Dino, happy. Happier at least than you would have been if you—if you had not found out your mistake in time. It *was* a mistake that you loved me best," said Italia bravely, crushing her poor little hands tightly together

beneath her shawl ; "but I know it was not your fault. I know you did not mean to hurt me."

"I would rather—I would rather have died than hurt you ! Yet I deserve every word that your father said. I deserve a thousand times more. I had no right to speak to you when I did. I must not—I cannot ask you to marry me, Italia."

Her head drooped a little. "I know it," she said, almost in a whisper, "and that is why I do not want you to blame yourself for what has happened. If you have promised things to other people— My father always said that one must keep one's word." She turned her face away abruptly. "I am glad that—that I was not mistaken in everything. I am glad to know that you did love me."

"More than my life !" said Dino, with a solemn ardor. She looked so simply noble in her sorrow, he could have knelt before her as before a saint.

She drew in her breath sharply with a half sob. "That is what I wished to say to you. Do not be troubled when you think of me. I shall always trust you. If—if we could have gone on caring for one another, I should always have been your friend as well as your sweetheart. At least—whatever other people claim

from you—there can be no harm in my still being your friend ; perhaps it may make you glad sometimes to know that there is one person who trusts you."

She let her hands fall to her side, and drew a step farther back with an action full of the gentlest dignity. "Will you go now, Dino ? I would rather that you went."

"I will go. Will you not look at me once more, Italia ?"

She hesitated for a second or two, and then, slowly, she lifted her large dark eyes. Her white face above the straight sombre folds of her mantle made her seem like the pale ghost of the radiant Italia of yesterday. His heart gave a great throb of love and passionate pity.

"My poor little girl, how I have hurt you ! My poor little child !"

"Don't be sorry," she said faintly, her eyes filling suddenly with tears. She tried to smile, but her lips only quivered pitifully. She could not speak : she lifted her arm and pointed to the stair.

When he looked back she was kneeling with clasped hands before the image of the Madonna above the closed church door.

The air was very fresh and cool. The early morning dew was lying thickly on the soft

powdery dust of the high road, and on the short crisp turf of the downs. As Dino reached the turning in the path the first red light of the rising sun touched the black belfry above the church, and glittered here and there on some of the higher windows in the village. Far below him, seen between the folding of the downs, a white mist was lying over the motionless gray plain of the sea.

Afterwards, he could never remember very distinctly what he had done with himself that day. There was nothing to call him back to Leghorn. There seemed nothing to call him back anywhere. Until Valdez should summon him, he was powerless to act: had he not committed himself, his life, his future, had he not delivered it all over, bound hand and foot, into the inexorable grasp of those men? And what did it matter how or when it was disposed of?

For the moment, he felt so indifferent to all that concerned himself that, had Valdez been there before him, he would not have asked him a single question. That he was to forfeit his life in this proposed attempt was so much a foregone conclusion he did not even think of it. He could have sworn that he had never thought of it once since that first branding instant of revelation; but the conviction of it had eaten its way into him until it had become a part of

his slightest, most involuntary action. When he spoke of "next year," "next month," when he used the very word "to-morrow," he checked himself like a man on the verge of betraying a secret ; it seemed to him so incredible that he alone, among all the living, breathing creatures about him, should stand unobserved, encompassed by the very shadow of death. When his mother looked at him suddenly he felt that she must read his sentence on his face. At times he was filled with a dull wonder at their blindness ; it was like slowly sinking in a quicksand while they stood near, looking on with smiling eyes.

Scarcely more than a week had passed since the blow first struck him. He was, as yet, benumbed, paralyzed by the icy clasp of the inevitable. He was isolated ; cut off suddenly from all his past ; the possibility of revolt had not yet occurred to him ; the craving for life, mere life, had not awakened ; all his experiences had changed at the same moment ; he had not had time to grow accustomed to the new conditions, to realize the inextricable, inescapable claims of habit. He was like a man shipwrecked, and keeping a precarious footing upon some slippery rock in mid-ocean ; his actions, his pre-occupations, were so many temporary measures. He was engrossed in the present precisely because he had no future.

Could he have been asked, that is, more or less, the account he would have given of himself. But in truth, he did *not* realize the situation. And how could he?— while the young blood ran easily and warmly in his veins, and the morning air tasted freshly, and there was no sense of physical effort in scaling the steepest crest of these hills. The very fulness of his life deceived him. He thought himself resigned to lose all because he could not—he was incapable of comprehending the final loss of anything. For the present, his youth, his sense of vitality, were lying dormant, silenced and motionless like that sleeping sea.

But indeed he was not conscious of himself this morning. He walked for hours, steadily, determinedly ; stopping at the top of every hill to look back at the country beneath him with a blank mechanical stare. He could never remember of what he had been thinking, or if he had been thinking of anything at all. There was nothing left of this day in his memory but a confused recollection of wide grassy spaces where the wind was the only thing living, and the face of a shepherd to whom he spoke about mid-day, and the sight of many fields planted with vines.

The man's face came back to him, later, a vivid and detached image, like the fragment of

a fever dream. It was after twelve o'clock when Dino passed him, sitting on the side of a hill, eating his dinner of sour black bread, with his sheep scattered about him, and his dog lying at his feet. Dino might have passed without seeing him had it not been for the dog, who started up, growling. And then, at sight of the bread, the young man remembered suddenly that he had not tasted food that day. The shepherd had merely lifted his eyes for a moment, but without speaking or interrupting his meal. Dino threw himself on the sun-warmed grass a few paces farther on ; in the very action of lying down he realized his fatigue. He shut his eyes for an instant or two ; then he said with some impatience :

“Eh, *buon’ uomo!* are you accustomed to so many strangers, then, that you hav’n’t a single word left to say ?”

There was a perceptible pause, and then, “Are you speaking to me, sir ?” the man inquired slowly.

Dino laughed.

“My good fellow, do you suppose I am talking to your dog ? He did his best by barking ; do you think I expected him also to wish me good morning ?”

The shepherd looked at him reflectively. It was a strange idea, but then people who came

from a distance often expected strange things to happen. He turned his eyes slowly upon the dog ; there was something reassuringly unchangeable in the cock of that ear and the accustomed wag of that stumpy tail.

"He does not speak. *È un cane,*" he remarked tranquilly.

"And so am I, or at least I am a *bestia*, which is all very much the same thing, for not telling you sooner that I am hungry. I am very hungry. I 've eaten nothing all day. Will you give me a piece of your bread ?"

He spoke slowly and clearly, and the familiar words found an immediate response. The man stooped forward, drew the long knife out of the leathern sheath which hung from his waist under the sheep-skin cloak, and placing his loaf of bread between his feet on the ground before him, he cut it into two pieces. He handed one of them to Dino.

The young man looked at him with a bright smile breaking like light across his face. "I can't pay you for it. I have not a soldo in my pocket."

The man continued to hold out the lump of bread.

"Ye said ye was hungry," he observed presently, and then, as Dino took the loaf with a quick "Thank you," his countenance brightened.

Here at last was something intelligible. He watched the disappearance of the black morsel with a feeling of sympathy, which was shared in another degree by the bright-eyed mongrel at his feet.

When the last crumb was finished he rose slowly and moved away a few paces to where a patch of dark furze bushes made a cool hiding-place for a small wooden keg of spring water. He brought the little barrel to Dino under his arm, and held it for him with both hands, while the young man took a long drink with his lips against the bung-hole. Then the shepherd drank also, while his dog fawned thirstily at his feet.

"What good water! Do you bring it up here with you?" Dino asked.

The other nodded his head affirmatively.

"It comes from down there. From the Padrone's well in the courtyard."

"And who is the Padrone?" Dino questioned lazily. The food and drink had rested him. He lay on his back on the warm turf with half-shut eyes. A vague soft wind wandered over the grass, and caressed his face and hair; all about him on the hill-side was a small continuous sound of tinkling bells, and the steady crop, cropping of the sheep. "Who *is* your Padrone?" he repeated in a sleepy voice.

The man looked at him in a slow puzzled way. “*Mah! . . . è il Padrone nostro,*” he said after a pause.

He thrust the iron end of his long shepherd’s staff into the ground, and leaned upon it with both hands. His face was of the serious Dantesque-Florentine type: a puritanic face, with pointed beard and long straight black hair. He kept his hands spread out flat, resting his weight upon the palms of them; the finger-nails showed like white spots in contrast to the sun-burned skin.

“He is very rich, our Padrone,” he added slowly, after a longer interval. “He has one hundred and forty thousand francs of his own, *l’una sull’ altra.*” He stared at the ground as if he saw the money lying there in piles: “*Cento quaranta mille lire, l’una sull’ altra.*” For fully half an hour he did not speak again.

Dino lay upon the grass and watched him. An insane desire, a fantastic whim, born of no conceivable reason, prompted him to inform this half-brutalized peasant of his real object and intentions. He was seized with a wild craving to explain it all, to tell the shepherd who he was, what he proposed to do, and how he—he, Dino de’ Rossi,—that young fellow lying on his back in the sun, that idler in a workman’s dress, without a soldo in his pocket, was in very truth

a messenger of Fate, a condemned man, the future assassin of a king.

He looked at the silly sheep all about him, at the peaceful country, at the peasant's patient and serious face. The grim humor of the situation filled him with a sort of desperate inhuman enjoyment. He felt possessed of a mocking devil. He opened his lips to speak, and then, quite suddenly, he rolled over on his face and lay there motionless for many minutes, with his head buried in his arms. He was asking himself if he were going mad.

Presently he rose to his feet. Before leaving he thrust his hand into the pocket of his coat and brought out a handful of cigars.

"Take these, my good fellow. I wish I had something else to give you. But if you cut them up with your knife you can smoke the tobacco in that pipe of yours."

The shepherd put out his hand, examined the gift deliberately, then thrust it inside his jacket without speaking.

"*Addio, buon' uomo.*"

"*Addio!*"

When Dino had got a dozen paces off the other man moved, and called upon him to stop.

"Well, what is it?"

"*Grazie, sapete!*" the shepherd said, and held up one of the cigars. Dino waved his hand in recognition.

*“Addio, Signore!”*

*“Addio!”*

The moment that spot where he had tasted human companionship was hidden from him by a folding of the hill, instantly, the old spell was upon him. But he walked less quickly now than in the morning ; the recollection of Drea's words was farther away ; the thought of Italia oppressed his heart with a sort of physical pain ; he could *feel* it ; but the first unbearable moment of anguish was over, there was a certain languor of exhaustion mingling with all his sensations.

About six o'clock he found himself near the path by which they had crossed the field on the way to the pilgrimage yesterday. Some instinct told him that Italia would not pass that way again. He followed the track to the edge of the high road. There was a plantation of young grape-vines on the opposite side of the highway ; he crossed over and lay down among the long weeds and grass at the bottom of the dry ditch.

He had not long to wait. Two or three vehicles passed him, cabs from Leghorn, and open carts, all crowded with the returning holiday-makers, and presently — here they were !

He saw Drea first ; the old man sat in front beside the driver, his woollen cap was pulled down over his eyes ; he looked neither to right

nor left. The women were talking, Lucia holding a large green umbrella over them as if to shield them from the dust. Palmira was sitting at the back, her head resting against Italia's shoulder. The child said something, and as they passed Dino saw Italia turn her dear pale face to answer ; — he saw her smile.

There was something in the action, in the mere fact of her smiling, which made him realize as never before all that her sweet love might have meant to him. He saw the detail of the coming years. Beyond the grief and the shock which he knew his end would bring to her, he looked forward ; he saw her going on with life, growing older, growing happy again,—a new happiness, in which the old days had no share. The thought of Italia living without him ; the vision of long days in summer when the sky would be as blue to her and the wind as sweet as in the past summers which had been *theirs* ; the prophetic knowledge of what must be, of what would be, pressed slowly and heavily upon him, a horror of great darkness. Curiously enough, what he regretted most, what filled him with the most passionate sense of isolation and loss, were the very slightest details of life ; the small familiar interests, the old childish remembrances, and little customs, and the young companionship of foolish joyous laughter. It all

seemed so dear, so living to him now. And he too was so young.

Poor Dino ! He sat there, twisting the long, tough weeds between his fingers without even seeing them, until the sound of approaching voices startled him. He looked up. There were two men walking among the vines, examining the fresh shoots. One was a laborer, the other a fat Tuscan *propriétaire*, dressed in a sort of loose gray jacket, like a dressing-gown ; he had a gray cap on his head, and wore spectacles.

Dino watched him idly for a moment, the idea passing through his mind that this was probably the rich Padrone of the sheep he had left behind him on the hill-side.

After a while the men moved away, and then the silence became unbearable. Dino felt that he ought to be going back to Leghorn, he felt the claim of Sora Catarina's anxiety ; but he could not decide to go back among all those people, who knew him and who would speak to him.

He crossed over the field again, and strolled off to the edge of the down. The moon was rising above the sea. Presently it appeared over the edge of the great grassy slope, white, spent, a visionary thing. The luminous sky was still full of a pink glow in the west ; behind this ghostly visitant it had turned to an opaque

blue. The great shoulder of the hill made a gray surface of foreground.

Little by little the color came creeping back into the grass, the moon grew metallic in texture, first golden, then of a coppery red; the down immediately beneath it telling in this half light as a mass of green washed with bronze. Here and there the deep shadow of a patch of gorse made a fantastically-shaped spot of darkness upon the turf. The quick flight of a whirring insect was distinctly audible in this still air; now and then, from very far off, sounded the cry of some belated bird.

Over moving water the moon may be an enchantress, a weaver of potent spells, but it is on the downs she dominates — the still mistress of the night, of the lonely empty country and the lonely empty sky.

Yet Dino noted nothing of the beauty around him. He was not in despair now, he was not even suffering; he was worn out, inert, it was as if the apathy of death had fallen upon his soul.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CHOOSING.

FOUR days later the Marchese Gasparo was on his way to Andrea's boat-house.

There was no brighter appearance in the street that day than the countenance of this young soldier as he walked briskly along, with alert glances, his head well up, and his mind full of pleasant thoughts, which every now and then made his handsome face flush with an unconscious gleam of interest and amusement. Life was full of interesting things to Gasparo — and flattering things as well. Only this morning he had heard from the Colonel of his regiment that he had been selected to act as one of the King's body-guard on the occasion of the approaching review at Rome. He had the letter now in his pocket. His mother, too, had been unexpectedly generous of late in the matter of supplies ; at the present moment he had quite a little stock of crisp bank-notes carefully stowed away in that inner pocket. Altogether he felt himself in a brilliant and successful vein of luck.

It seemed almost a pity that so much confident good-humor should be exposed to any unwelcome shock or jar, and it was with a distinct feeling of annoyance that, as he turned out of the noisy Via Grande into the quieter expanse of the quay, his quick eyes recognized a familiar figure in the person of a short, middle-aged man coming slowly towards him.

They were too near to one another for any affectation of ignorance to seem possible. Gasparo looked sharply up and down the street, then, with a peremptory nod and a careless greeting of "Well, Valdez!" attempted to pass on.

Unfortunately the driver of a heavy cart laden with white blocks of Carrara marble had also selected that especial moment in which to cross into one of the narrower streets. The road was completely blocked by the unwieldy mass of stone and the four straining white oxen. The two men would be forced to wait at the same corner; Gasparo took in the awkwardness of the situation at a glance.

"I hear that you have called three times at my house for the purpose of seeing me," he said; "I have no objection to your calling there, not in the least. That is a matter for you to settle with my servants who answer the door. But if you have any hope of the Contessa Paula

taking you back on my recommendation, why, I may as well tell you now, my good man, that it was on my recommendation that you were dismissed."

"So I understood from the Signora Contessa herself," Pietro Valdez answered quietly; "and that is precisely why I did myself the honor to call upon you, Marchese Balbi. It interested me to know your reasons for what you had done."

"And pray, what leads you to suppose that I should think of giving you a reason for whatever I may think fit to do?" Gasparo demanded, with a short, scornful laugh.

Valdez shrugged his heavy shoulders; he seemed to consider that the question required no answer. "The Signora Contessa Paula had engaged me as her music master at a fixed salary for six months. I gave her perfect satisfaction. It interests me to know what arguments you used to secure my dismissal," he repeated, with absolute self-command.

"I might, if I had chosen, have told her that you were an insolent scoundrel. As it happens, your impudent republican theories were quite sufficient. We do not choose to assist socialists to live; neither I nor my friends."

Valdez bowed gravely. "That is what I wished to know. I have only to thank you, sir, for the

information." Then he smiled. "I did not know — I was not aware that you did me the honor of interesting yourself in my political convictions."

Gasparo's look of negligent scorn was fast passing into an expression of quicker anger. He contemplated Valdez in silence for a moment, then he said sharply: "You are uncommonly mistaken if you think I care a rap how you get yourself into the hands of the police. You're safe to do that sooner or later. But I do mind about your leading Dino de' Rossi into mischief. You've got him turned out of one place already through your infernal rubbishing nonsense; you had better be careful how you do it again."

Valdez laughed.

"I've known Dino de' Rossi since he was a little chap of ten years old. He's a good fellow is Dino; and very loyal to his friends. Will the Signor Marchese excuse my suggesting that it might be well if all Dino's friends were equally loyal to him?"

"And what the devil do you mean by that, sir?" said Gasparo, facing around abruptly and speaking in a fiercely challenging tone.

"This is the direct way to the house of old Drea, the fisherman, whose daughter is Dino's sweetheart. I have had the pleasure of seeing her: she is a very good, modest, innocent young girl. But there are other boatmen in Leghorn,

Signor Marchese ; men to whom it might matter less in the end if you took to frequenting their houses every day."

" I — *Perdio !* if I thought you knew what you were saying — If I considered you anything but a meddlesome fool, I would — "

He raised his eyes, looking about him as if in search of some term strong enough to express his meaning, and it so chanced that his gaze fell upon the rubicund countenance of our old acquaintance of the Telegraph Office, the leather merchant, Sor Giovanni.

The first syllables which the young Marchese had spoken in an angry tone had reached that worthy tradesman's ears as he stood peaceably behind his own counter ; but as his sense of wonder grew great with what it fed on, he had insensibly edged nearer and nearer to the scene of the encounter, until there he stood in his own doorway, both thumbs thrust into the band of his leather apron, his fat cheeks and glassy eyes fairly beaming with gratified curiosity.

A very little thing appealed to Gasparo's light-hearted sense of the ridiculous. He burst now into a fit of most unaffected laughter.

When he recovered himself he had lost the thread of his discourse.

" You may be sure of one thing, my man : the Countess Paula's is not the only house you have

lost by *this* morning's work," he said dryly ; and he turned on his heel and walked away whistling.

"By my blessed patron, San Giovanni ! I should not like to be in *your* shoes, friend Pietro," observed the fat leather-merchant in an awed voice, gazing up the street with profound respect at the Marchese Gasparo's receding figure. "I should not choose to be in *your* shoes, not I. *I* know the young gentleman, — Livornese born and Livornese bred. It's no joke, let me tell you, to get on the wrong side of the account-book with a Balbi."

"Well, well," said Valdez, half impatiently ; "it's only another example of the surprising contagion of folly. There were not fools enough in the world this morning apparently, and I have taken care to add one more to the number. 'T is not a hanging matter ; that's the best one can say for it. And so good-day to you, Sor Giovanni."

"Wait a bit, wait a bit, now," said solid Sor Giovanni soothingly. "I just want to ask you a question or two now about Dino de Rossi. The Signor Marchese was speaking about young De Rossi, eh ! eh ! I have sharp ears, friend Pietro, and it seemed to me that there was talk of our Dino's falling into doubtful ways. That's bad, you know — very bad. I had some thought of offering him a place in my business once ; he is

a good accountant, I am told, and would hardly expect much of a salary if one took him in when he was under a cloud, so to speak. I thought of it the day he left the Telegraph Office, but I waited—I waited to make him the offer. There's many a man has turned up his nose over the fresh loaf at breakfast-time who was ready to say his prayers over the crust at supper. It's all a question of supply and demand. One sees these things in the way of business."

"Ay, there's small difficulty in seeing the duty one owes to oneself in the way of business," said Valdez in his quiet way.

"E-e-eh, friend Pietro! *che volete?* Half the world is for sale, and the other half in pawn; you know the saying. But about this Dino, now. He is a friend of yours? You could answer for him, eh?"

"I answer for no man, my good Giovanni. And as for this young De Rossi; I have seen him, it is true. I knew his father; but—" He shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"See there, now! and I who counted upon your telling me more about him; for I know nothing against the young man myself, nothing but that he's a little over fond of the sound of his own voice, and for that matter he's young, he's young. He's at the age when every donkey loves his own bray. I don't know any other harm in him."

"Harm in him? No. There's no harm in a weathercock if what you want to know is which way the wind is blowing," said Valdez carelessly, and apparently quite absorbed in arranging the heavy folds of his dark circular cloak with the green lining. In reality his mind was full of a new plan for hastening their journey to Pisa. Clearly it would not do for Dino to show himself too often in his company.

Meanwhile Gasparo was hastening towards Drea's house, with just that amount of additional pleasure in the action as would naturally follow on the sense of successful opposition to somebody else's will. As for Dino, — Gasparo saw no necessity of thinking about Dino. In any case, Dino could not afford to marry, and even if he *did*, — for, in arguing a point in one's own favor, why not take both sides of the question? — even if he did marry, there were other girls in Leghorn besides this brown-eyed Italia. "Little witch! I wonder if she guesses what she could make me do when she looks up at me with that innocent baby face of hers?" He sauntered down the steps with an expression of deepening enjoyment, a glance of expectation.

She was sitting in the old place, by the corner of the wall. Her sad face brightened a little as she looked up at the sound of footsteps and saw the young Marchese approaching her.

She rose instantly, but she waited for him to speak.

"My little Italia! you look very pale. What is the matter? Has anything been troubling you?"

"I am quite well, sir, thank you. I am only tired."

"And what has been tiring you, then? Too much pilgrimage, eh? Too many prayers in a cold church; is that not so?"

He looked at her more closely.

"You are quite sure the father has not been scolding you?"

"Oh no, sir, my father never scolds me."

"Because I have brought something with me to restore good humor to a dozen angry fathers. See here, little one," — it seemed at first sight a curious name to apply to that tall, slender girl with the sad eyes, but there was something child-like and unconscious about Italia's beauty which suggested the use of caressing diminutives — "see!"

He drew a small fancifully embroidered case out of an inner pocket and opened it before her. Inside were five crisp pink bank-notes of a hundred francs each.

"There, Italia *mia!* You can tell your father that is what my father meant to give him, — and the other two hundred francs

are for interest. Tell him he has not lost by waiting."

"Signor Marchese!"

It was pretty to see how the color flushed all over her face and throat, to the very border of her scarlet handkerchief. "My father will be so happy,—and so proud," she said shyly. She did not dare to touch the little portfolio until he tossed it gayly into her apron, and then she turned it over with a childish pleasure in the bright colors and gilt thread of the embroidery; it impressed her more than any amount of money.

"I wonder what father will do with it? He will not know what to do. We were never rich before," she said at last, looking up at the young man who stood before her with grateful shining eyes.

Gasparo was watching her intently. His own face flushed and softened as their glances met. He tossed back his head with an air of bright decision.

"Should you like more money,—a great deal of money, which would be all yours to spend as you please? Should you like to be rich, *Italia mia?*"

"Oh no," said the girl quickly. And then she laughed. "I should not know what to do. My father always says it is not enough to

have money, one must have brains to spend it. And I should be miserable. I should be like one of those ragged little sparrows over there if you put it in a fine gold cage. I should always be wanting to get back to the old ways. I think even the smallest bird must enjoy its wings."

"But suppose some one was with you in the cage? Some one who was very good to you and looked after you? Do you think you would not like it better then?" he asked in the gentlest voice. And then, as she did not answer immediately: "Listen, my Italia. I have heard some foolish story of your betrothal to that young De Rossi, — to Dino, but it is not true; is it? You are not *promessa*; your father told me so only the other day."

He moved a little nearer, so that his handsome glowing face was very close to hers. He was very much in earnest now; inclination and the sense of opposition were firing the old rebellious Balbi blood; with that air of tender deference tempering the bright audacity of his presence, he looked the very incarnation of persuasive joy; the divine glamour of success was like an atmosphere about him; he carried himself with the compelling confidence of a young god; — it was Bacchus wooing Ariadne beside the rippling sea. "My Italia, you are not betrothed?" he repeated softly.

Her face had turned very pale: her lips quivered. "No."

"Ah," said Gasparo, drawing in his breath quickly.

Her thick dark hair was loosely twisted into a heavy knot; and pinned back just above the nape of her neck. One long waving lock had escaped from its fastening, and lay across her shoulder. The young man looked at it, and then just lifted it with the tip of a finger.

"One of my ancestors married an Infanta of Spain. But I am Gasparo Balbi; I can do what I choose, and nothing can alter that. A Balbi does as he pleases." He put his hand against her cheek and turned the averted face towards his own, very gently. "Look at me, Italia. Don't you know that you can make me commit any sort of folly when you look at me with those big eyes of yours? My little Italia, next week I shall have to go away, back to Rome. But I care too much for you,—very much too much,—to leave you as I found you, you little sorceress! Now listen. Before I go I want you to promise me that some day you will marry me. Do you hear, Italia? I want you to say that some day, very soon, you will be my wife."

"Oh, no—no!" she said, in a frightened whisper, keeping her eyes fixed upon him and starting back.

"But I say — yes!" repeated Gasparo smiling. Now that the die was cast, he could scarcely understand how he had hesitated ; she was so simple, so sweet, so well worth the winning — in any fashion — this brown-eyed daughter of the people.

He would have taken her hand, but she drew back and stood against the old stone buttress of the bridge. Her face had grown grave with the expression it wore when she was singing. She shrank back, her two little sunburned hands hanging down and clasped tightly before her.

"Signor Marchese — "

She hesitated for an instant, and her eyelids dropped. "It is — it is very good of you to take so much trouble about me. But what you say is quite impossible. I could never marry you, never. I am not a lady, and I don't want to be rich or — or — anything."

Then the color rushed back to her cheeks, and she lifted her head and looked at him full in the face.

"You have been very good to my father, — and to me, sir. And I knew you when we were all children, so you will forgive me if I take a liberty. I *never* should care for you, sir : I love Dino. We are not betrothed," — her eyes filled with tears, — "he can never marry me ; and he and my father have quarrelled. Perhaps I shall

never see my Dino again. But I do love him,—dearly," she said, with a half sob.

When Gasparo had gone the sobs came fast and faster. Life had suddenly grown full of confusing pain; it was bewildering. And Dino seemed so far off. She knelt before her bed, in the little inner chamber, and pressed her hands hard before her face in the effort to recall the very sound of his voice when he spoke to her. She tried to feel again the warm strong pressure of his hand upon hers. And she loved him so! she loved him so! the poor child repeated to herself over and over. How *could* he bear to leave her? how *could* he let anything come between his love and her?

But after a while the sobs grew quieter: she still knelt, gazing straight before her with an expression of sweet and ardent belief upon her tear-stained face. The words he had spoken at the church door had come back to her. "*You know I never meant to hurt you, dear. Italia, you do know that I love you.*" She said them over in a whisper, like a prayer, looking up at the little picture of the Madonna above her bed. No other words would come, but surely our pitiful Lady of Sorrows would hear and understand.

She was not altogether to be pitied, this grief-stricken Italia. For to her, at least, in time,

could come that great reward,—the sense of having lived a faithful life; in which the first indeed could be the last; a life wherein no loved thing has been forgotten, and memory and belief are alike sacred.

When Drea came home from his morning's work he found everything in order. His dinner was ready for him beside the fire. He ate it in silence; seeming to take very little notice of his daughter's white cheeks and heavy-lidded eyes. But as he sat smoking his pipe after dinner, he put out his rough hard hand as she passed by in front of him, and drew her down gently upon his knee.

"Don't fret, my little girl; don't fret now," he said tenderly, and stroked her ruffled hair.

Then he added cheerfully: "Come now! you said the young Padrone was going to make me a present. Let us hear about it. Good Lord, it must be a matter of twenty years since any one has thought of making me a present.—And I'll tell you what, my girl, it's full moon to-night. If you like, I will take you out in the boat with me when I go to look after the nets. And so courage, my little one, courage! Lord bless you! it's only in a storm one can find out who's a good sailor. And so cheer up — for what's an old father good for if it isn't to keep

those pretty eyes from getting red with crying?  
And the good God lets a man do, but He  
does n't let him overdo. He's no fool, is Dino.  
We're not at the end of the matter yet.'

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ON THE BUOY.

THERE was no difficulty in arranging for that journey to Pisa. As soon as it was settled that they were to go by water, to row themselves the fifteen miles of the old disused canal, Dino volunteered to have the skiff in readiness at a moment's notice. "I want to be away from here. The sooner we start, the sooner it's all over, the better pleased I shall be," the young man insisted impatiently.

Ever since his return from Monte Nero he had done nothing but urge upon Valdez the necessity of some immediate action ; if it were only to go on this trip to the next town to secure the purchase of the revolver, at least that would be something accomplished. A curious restless gloom had fallen upon Dino's open countenance. It was as if he could never quite free himself from the scathing bitterness of old Andrea's reproaches. He longed for action, definite action, however distasteful. Each slow bright day which passed seemed a long space of

painful suspense until he stood cleared in the old fisherman's eyes. "He may think me a madman if he pleases. He can never think of me again as a coward," the young man told himself bitterly. Valdez could understand nothing of this sudden change in him.

"You puzzle me, lad—and you lack patience."

"Patience!" repeated Dino, "and what for, pray? I have read in some book that it is faith, and not prudence, which has power to move mountains. What does anything else matter so long as we have the faith?"

Valdez looked at him very gravely.

"You are sneering, my Dino. And I find that, as a rule, people who distrust or deny their own emotions are justified by many of their subsequent actions in the lack of faith. Don't do it, boy. Not to believe in others,"—the old republican's eye flashed,—"not to trust in others, is to reduce life to a mean habit," he said.

They were sitting in Dino's own room, and the young man's gaze wandered restlessly over the walls; it seemed as if he were trying to learn by heart the position of each small familiar object.

"Why, it is like a bit of the old days back again, Valdez, to hear you lecture one!"

"Ay, lad."

The elder man was following out his own train of thought. "Perhaps I ought not to be so much surprised at the way it is taking hold of you. Until one is two or three and twenty one thinks of oneself: after that one is preoccupied with life, its combinations and its issues. And life is the bigger thing of the two."

He stood up and laid his sensitive, long-fingered, musician's hand upon Dino's shoulder. "Then that is settled. Bring the boat around to-night; and we start early in the morning," he said slowly. He looked hard into Dino's face, and his lips worked as if on the point of adding something. But whatever it was the words remained unspoken. He turned away, and a moment later Dino heard him wishing Sora Catarina a grave "*Buon giorno!*" as he passed through the outer room.

Later in the day Dino had spoken to his mother about his intention of absenting himself for an expedition of two or three days to Pisa. To his surprise Sora Catarina made not the least objection.

He postponed telling her until the last possible moment, acting in this on the opinion he had once heard Drea express about an angry woman's scolding. "When a woman's got a tongue in her head, the wise man never speaks to her until he's putting his hat on; for it's no

matter how hard the wind blows so long as it blows from astern." But Catarina had not justified this prevision.

It was easy to see that she had something on her mind from the anxious glances which she kept casting in her son's direction, but it was not until he was just at the door and ready to start that she laid down her knitting resolutely, and said :

" My Dino, do you think your mother has gone blind ? If you won't speak, I must. But things were different once. When you were a little lad,—it does n't seem so long ago to me as to you, my boy,—you did n't wait for me to call you when you had hurt yourself. You were quick enough in coming to your mother when anything was paining you *then*. And a woman loses enough in seeing her children grow too big for her arms to hold 'em ;—there's no need of their hearts outgrowing her as well."

She spoke in a plaintive tone, her voice growing more and more complaining as she went on with her remonstrance ; and as she ended she shut her lips tightly and took up her knitting again with an injured expression. " Whatever you may choose to say, Dino, your mother is not blind."

" Nay, mother, that is the last thing I should think of saying. But what is it now ? You

must not take fancies in your head about me, mother. I've not been complaining of anything, you know."

"Oh, if it's a fancy in my head, of course that's the end of it! I've nothing more to say; if it's a fancy that it's more than a week now since I've seen you sit down to eat your dinner like a Christian, as if you knew whether the dish before you were boiled beef or a boiled bone. And perhaps it's my fancy, too, those black rings under your eyes, and the new trick you've learnt of sighing!" She threw her knitting down upon the table, and crossed the room to where Dino was standing.

"My own boy, do you think I can't see that you are breaking your heart about that little girl, that Italia? And it's of no use, my Dino: believe your old mother in this. Her head is turned; she won't have a word more to say to you. There's no harm in the girl, but her head is turned."

She hesitated for a moment, watching him anxiously. "Dino! you know if I care for my other boy, my young master, that I nursed and looked after till I hardly could tell which I was fondest of, him or you. But, my Dino, he goes too often to Andrea's, does Gasparo. And that girl takes after her mother—a poor washy, big-eyed thing, who never knew if her soul was her

own to pray for until she'd asked her husband.  
And the girl takes after her mother."

"You said once you would not speak hardly  
of Italia again, mother."

"I said once—I said once! *Santa pazienza!* it would be a fine task to remember the things one has said once. And besides, I'm saying nothing against her; the Lord keep me from it. Girls! I've been a girl myself. And you know our Leghorn saying—when you want to marry a girl off 't is easy work doing it; with four rags and four tags you can send the devil from one house into another. But, my Dino, listen." She laid her hand rather timidly on the cuff of his coat-sleeve; what she was going to say would displease him, and she wanted to propitiate him—not to seem as if she too were concerned in his disappointment. "My Dino, at Monte Nero, we were speaking, between us women, of the young Marchese. And Lucia said she wondered if he would be thinking of marrying soon; she's like all other old maids is Lucia; she can't see a man in the next street without wondering what he thinks about marriage. And Italia looked up; you know that innocent sort o' way of hers; and 'Oh no,' she says, 'Sora Lucia. Oh no,' she says. 'The Marchese Gasparo is not in love with any of those fine ladies he knows. He told me so,

only yesterday,' says she. And then I just looked at her. 'And pray how did he come to be speaking to you about anything of the kind?' I asked her. And perhaps I spoke a little sharp, for she turned very red, and then she looked at me with her big eyes without speaking, as if I was a painted image of one of the blessed saints. And then she said, 'He told me because he was speaking of what his mother wished him to do.' His mother! That would be the Signora Marchesa. And it's a proper thing surely that a little chit like that should know more about my old mistress than I do. Yes. - 'He was speaking of what his mother wished him to do.' His mother indeed! not even the Signora Padrona, or the Signora Marchesa, but 'his mother!'—that is what she said."

Dino remained silent.

"Ah," Catarina went on, merging her particular grievance in that general sense of relief to be found in indiscriminate complaint, "ah, it's small wonder perhaps that the young master has never been near his old nurse, or given me so much as a 'good morning,' since the day he came back to Leghorn. And so fond of his old Catarina as he used to be! I remember him when he had the fever; not a spoonful of medicine would he touch if Catarina was not there to give it to him. But things change in this

world, they do ; it's a pity, while they're about it, they don't sometimes change for the better. There'd be more change i' *that*."

Dino smiled faintly. "Well, well, mother ! there's no good fretting over what can't be helped. Don't worry yourself, that's the most important."

"Ah, don't worry ! that's a man's way all over. As if one sent out to the market to buy trouble, for fear of not having enough at home ! But it's easy work telling your mother not to worry, Dino, when she sees you going about with such a look on your face."

"Nay, mother, suppose we let my face take care of itself." He mastered his impatience with an effort, and added, "If you would only believe me you would not make yourself so unhappy. Italia and I understand one another perfectly."

"Well, if that's what you and she call a perfect understanding, 't is a pity you don't try mistaking one another for a little. It might make you both look a bit happier. It was more like a funeral, coming home the other day, than anything else that *I* could give a name to. Not that I'm ever i' the right."

Sora Catarina ended with a stifled sob. She had known from the beginning that no good could come of speaking of this matter to Dino.

He was like his father ; he might act from impulse, but he would never change his purpose for any one's asking. And now that she had spoken, it all happened precisely as she expected. She went on crying quietly, with a feeling of having only succeeded in verifying her own lack of influence.

But Dino was more deeply affected than appeared on the surface. Like a great many oversensitive people, who dread and foresee pain, he often denied its very existence ; but the pain remained. The idea of Gasparo's growing intimacy with Italia haunted him like an impending sense of evil. A wild plan of warning old Drea, of insisting upon seeing and speaking to him, began to assume more and more of the character of a resolve in the young man's mind. But if he went there to-night Italia would be at home ; he could not expose himself to be insulted before Italia ; and to-morrow he was going away. There was no use in writing, Drea could only read his own name.

Dino's mind was full of these considerations as he walked down to the Old Port. It was a foggy night, the full moon just rising over the hill-tops shone through a thick white veil ; but his plan was only to secure the boat to-night, and row it across the Port to the mouth of the canal. He would leave it moored there for the

night ; and he knew every inch of the harbor, the fog could make no difference.

It made this difference, that, coming out into the air again from the small stove-heated room where he had been sitting longer than he expected, engaged in bargaining with the owner of the boat, the singular beauty of the night came upon Dino like a revelation.

It was an absolutely white night ; the fog hung low above the water. Overhead the full moon shone in a clear blue transparent sky. From the land the harbor looked enshrouded in a clinging cloud ; but to any one on the level of the water the fog appeared as a resplendent and glorified vision, a lower heaven of luminous vapor under which the dark oily-looking sea lay motionless, like a thing asleep. Twenty paces off the largest ship in port only loomed indistinctly, the merest ghost of a vessel, dim, shadowy, unsubstantial ; the red and green lights in the rigging were indistinguishable a dozen yards away. They sprang suddenly into visible existence, piercing the whiteness like living jewels, as the boat neared the ship's side. The air was strangely sonorous ; the faintest sounds—the laugh of a sailor in the forecastle, or the distant thud of an oar — were exaggerated out of all natural proportion. It was impossible to judge of distances ; everything was white, shining, impalpable. On

the darkest night there would have been at least some gleam of a signal-lantern to steer by ; but this was like being lost on enchanted seas of light.

“ *Una notte stregata* ; a white night is a witch’s night,” said the sailor lad who came down to the steps at the landing to bring Dino the oars for his boat. “ Keep your eyes open, comrade, or you ’ll be running into something before you ’ve time to sing out an *Ave.*”

“ Ay, ay,” answered Dino cheerfully, stepping into his skiff and pushing her off from shore.

He paddled gently along ; the soft moist air was pleasant upon his heated face, and there was no reason for hastening ; until to-morrow there was nothing more to be done. The strange appearance of the night was so alluring he felt tempted to make a wider circuit before fastening up his boat. He turned the prow in the direction of the outer sea-wall, away from the shipping, just dipping his oars into the water with a scarcely conscious motion.

He was rowing in the direction of a certain large red buoy, upon whose broad surface he and Italia had often played as children, when to be left there by Drea while the old fisherman went to look after his nets was to be left in possession of a wonderful floating island, a country which no one else claimed, and where the little playmates reigned supreme.

The place was so much associated with the thought of her that, as he drew nearer, it was scarcely strange to Dino to hear what seemed a far-off echo of Italia's singing ; he listened to the full contralto notes as if in a dream. It was all a part of the white magic of the night.

His boat moved noiselessly forward ; the round outline of the buoy rose close before him. The sound of the low singing had stopped ; but was there not something darker, the outline of a seated figure, upon that floating surface ?

He looked hard, standing up in his boat, and of a sudden all the dreamy mystery of enchantment vanished. This was no dream, no phantom ; it was Italia herself — Italia ! his Italia, whom he loved. The quick blood tingled to his finger-tips. He called to her, and fastened his boat alongside, and sprang upon the buoy ; it was all the work of an instant.

“Italia !” he said, “Italia ! Italia !”

She gave a little cry, and started to her feet, and looked at him. She stretched out her hands ; her heart beat in wild irregular throbs ; a contraction passed over her face ; she did not know herself if she were laughing or crying.

He made some inarticulate exclamation and knelt suddenly at her feet. Her silken handkerchief had fallen to the ground, it had been warm about her throat ; he covered the handkerchief with kisses.

Then he looked up at her as she stood above him steadyng herself with one hand upon his shoulder. He held out his arms, and she bent her head without speaking, and their mouths met in a kiss.

The movement had given a sudden impulse to their floating pedestal ; it swung violently for one instant from side to side, then the oscillations grew less rapid. The white radiance of the night seemed to close more heavily in about them. There was no sound or motion but in the quiet lapping of the waves.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### BELIEVING.

ITALIA spoke first.

"I knew you would come back to me."

"Darling!"

He kept his arm about her, and she nestled close against him, her soft cheek pressed against the rough woollen of his pilot-coat.

"*I knew* you would come back, my Dino. For I love you so. And the blessed Madonna is so very good. I prayed to her. I knew you would come back to me."

She lay quite still for a moment; all her weight resting against his shoulder. Then she moved uneasily. "You are sure it is you, Dino? Really you? It is not a dream?"

"No, dear."

He bent his head and covered her hair with softest kisses. "It is no dream, my Italia. It is like being in heaven."

"Yes." She sighed with perfect content.

But presently she moved a little away from him and turned, leaning both hands upon his

breast. "Dino, it was quite true, all that I told you, up there, at the church, the other morning. That dreadful morning! Dino, when you went away I felt as if my heart were dead."

"My poor little Italia!"

"She is a very happy little Italia now. But, Dino, I did mean it then. If you had been obliged not to give up all those things that father does not like—that club, you know, and those bad men—I would have tried to bear it, Dino. I knew you loved me all the same. And it did not matter so much what any one else thought of you. *I* believed you—always. For you do love me, Dino?"

He pressed his lips to her hair again without speaking.

"Dino! say you do!"

"I do love you, my Italia. I do love you. God knows how much."

"Dear Dino. I thought you knew that I could always be like a friend to you, like your little sister, whatever happened. But ah, this is better! I am so happy, Dino. And it is such a beautiful world; it seemed so hard to think that we were always to be hurt in it, always apart and miserable; and the happiness all about us, only we shut out from it, you and I."

She raised her head. "Do you know, dear, I could not imagine *how* you would come back to

me? No! don't tell me, you can tell me some other time; to-morrow, perhaps; now, I don't want to know. But I imagined—I don't know why, it was very foolish—I imagined there would have to be all sorts of talking, explanations first. It is so wonderful, Dino, happiness is always so much—so much—what shall I say? so much *happier* than one can possibly foresee it. I never thought of—this. And yet it was so simple." She had slipped one of her little hands in his, and was pressing his fingers tightly over hers with her other hand, with the contented air of a happy child. "But, do you know, you frightened me when you first called out, my Dino?"

"Did I frighten you, Italia?"

She lifted her head quickly, letting his hand fall. The suppressed tone of his voice had pierced her heart with its suggestion of untold suffering.

"Dino!"

She held her face close to his, trying to look into his averted eyes. "Dino, you are unhappy about something? Is it—Oh!"—she shrank suddenly away from him, and her face grew rigid and her lips trembled. "Is it—my Dino, forgive me for saying such a thing!—is it that there has been some mistake—again? Is it that—that—oh, Dino! that you did—not—mean—*this*?"

The miserable words dropped out slowly, one by one.

Whatever punishment he merited by his lack of generous self-control he tasted in its full bitterness in that hour. After what seemed a long long interval of crushing condemning silence she got up very quietly. Dino rose to his feet at the same moment. As the buoy rocked he would have put out his hand to steady her, but the wild look of anguish on her dear face held him motionless. He did not dare to touch her. He covered his eyes with his hands.

Presently she said, "We cared for each other even when we were little children. Perhaps that is why it seems so—strange, that you could do this to me."

Her voice began to tremble. Her fingers turned cold ; she held them clasped tightly together. So many images, so many memories out of the past, rushed back in one confusing flood upon her ; she could find no words, no relief, from pain. All the bewilderment and the mystery uttered themselves together in an appeal for help :

"Speak to me, Dino!"

Then he uncovered his face and spoke.

"Italia, before God ! until I met you here to-night, by chance, I never thought to take you in my arms on this side heaven. I cannot tell

you what this thing is which has come between us. Your father chooses to believe that it is because I am a republican, because I hold opinions which he thinks mad and wicked, that I will not promise to give up all else and—marry you. He thinks that I have deceived you—that I have acted basely. Italia"—he lifted up his eyes and looked at her—"I cannot tell you what it is which separates us. I *cannot*. Only—it would be better for you if you had never seen me. I wish to God that you had never seen me. I must go away very soon, away from Leghorn and the people I have known all my life. And I go away remembering that I have ruined your happiness. Yet I loved you, Italia. I loved you better than my own soul."

There was a moment's silence; then she spoke very quietly:

"Dino. My father remembers when they threw an Orsini bomb at the procession carrying the blessed sacraments out of the cathedral. He saw a priest killed, and some women and children. And it was the republicans who did it. My father saw it. He saw it done."

"Dear Italia," said Dino sadly, "surely you do not think that I approve of such an act? There are bad men in every place; men who hide their own selfishness and folly under every

high ideal, and bring it to discredit. They are like the moths who feed on the coverings of the holy vessels on the altar. Whatever I do with myself it shall not be for my own gain."

His voice changed a little, and he added, "But perhaps you will not believe that of me? perhaps you will never believe any good of me again?"

She seemed scarcely to understand what it was he said.

"Dino!"

She stretched out both hands with a sob. It was like the cry of a frightened child for mercy. "Dino, take me back, take me with you. I must be with you. It does n't matter about all the rest."

She threw herself into his arms, pressing her cheek against his, clasping his hands closer about her neck; speaking in short hurried sentences, her soft voice broken with sobs.

"Dino — it could not be again, you know. The dear Madonna would not let you go away from me again. Because, you know, my Dino, I could not bear it. I could not. And no one is expected to do what is impossible. It is n't that I'm not willing, Dino. I would do anything you told me to, anything. But if you asked me to lift a weight that was too heavy for me, I might want to do it, but I could not do it, —

could I? I should not be strong enough. And I am not strong enough for this—I am not strong enough."

She kept her face buried on his arm as if she were trying to hide away from what she dreaded. "Dino. It is such a happy world, dear. I could be so happy. See! even if you had to give up something, some ideas that you care for. My father says all young men have ideas about—about politics and all that—which they change as they get older. And even if you do not change. What does it matter? what does any of the rest of it matter? Dino—!"

He had his arm about her; he could feel her shaking from head to foot with heavy passionate sobs.

"Italia," he said, "stop crying. My dear. My poor, poor little child. I can't stand this. Right or wrong, I cannot stand it. It is too much to ask of me. Valdez may do what he pleases, I—" He bent his head and pressed his lips fervently upon her warm loosened hair. "Italia, I had promised. I had sworn to do something. But I break my oath. Look! I give it all up—for your sake. Look at me, Italia. They will call me a traitor, but I shall not have betrayed you."

Poor little Italia! She was very weary. She could not speak for many minutes; the choking

sobs *would* force themselves out despite all her efforts to conquer them. She let herself rest passively in his arms, while he called her by every tender name he could devise. But presently the tears were fewer ; she checked herself ; she lifted up her head and looked at him ; her eyes were full of love, but the far-away look in them meant even more than that ; they were shining with the enthusiasm of high resolve.

“Forgive me, my Dino. I ought to be stronger — I meant to be stronger. I meant to help you, not to make hard things harder for you to bear. Forgive me. I will not do it any more.” She drew herself gently away from him, and he made no effort to detain her. Her voice grew steadier as she went on speaking. “You could not do that. You could not be a traitor. Not even for us to be happy together. And it would not be happiness, Dino ; there would always be a black cloud between us and happiness. It is not as if we did not know the difference between faith and falsehood, Dino. We do know.”

“I will not, so help me God ! I will not be false to you,” he said roughly.

“My Dino.”

“Italia, why cheat ourselves with words ? what is faith or falsehood ? what does it all matter if faith means leaving you, and falsehood

your making my life a heaven? I love you: the rest is nothing. As for duty — who knows what is duty? Your father thinks it is my duty to stay with you. And another man bids me go. Why should I go? I promised; but is telling you that I loved you no promise? does it imply nothing? Do you tell me to go when I love you?"

"Yes, Dino," said Italia simply; "*because you love me.*"

She took his clenched hand in both of hers, and smoothed out the fingers with a great tenderness.

"Dear, I am not clever like you; I don't understand things. But I believe you. Dino, if it were for another man, and not for yourself, that you had to decide this thing —"

He drew away his hand, and looked away from her across the rippling sea. The breeze was freshening a little; there were long rents of darkness overhead where the fog was breaking, and showing the blue of the sky.

"Dino," the persuasive voice went on, "you might deceive yourself, not knowing, but you would not deceive me — your old playmate — your little sweetheart, who trusts you — trusts you against all the world. Dino, tell me. Have you the right to break this promise?"

"No," he said in a half whisper. Then he added, "But I would, if you told me to."

"Yes, Dino. But you would not do it now."

There was a long silence between them, then he asked abruptly:

"Will your father come back here to fetch you?"

"Yes, dear."

She had been sitting quite still, watching with saddest eyes the dimpling motion of the water. But his speaking seemed to recall her to herself; she sighed heavily, and stooping, picked up her fallen handkerchief, and knotted it about her throat. Then she pushed her loosened hair back from her temples, smoothing it down with the palms of both hands in a way which was familiar to her: he had watched her do it a hundred times before. She looked up at him, and their eyes met in a long solemn gaze of unspeakable pity and love.

After a moment he took her hand in his very gently and raised it to his lips.

"My good, good little Italia."

They sat in silence, like two children, holding each other's hands.

After what seemed a long time there was the sound of oars in the distance, and then the shadowy outline of Drea's boat. Dino drew her gently to him. "It is good-by, child; God keep you," he said huskily. Their lips met in a kiss which held the very passion of loss.

In another moment he had stepped from the buoy into his own boat. He went to meet Andrea.

"I have been with Italia. If you like I will listen to anything you have to say to me. But not here. I will follow you to your house," he said.

He followed at a little distance across the tranquil bay.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A LAST CHANCE.

DREA did not speak until they stood all three in the shelter of the familiar low-ceilinged room. Then he said, "I should like to be alone with Dino."

He waited until Italia had closed the door of the inner chamber behind her. He waited, standing in the firelight, his powerful knotted hands hanging loosely beside him ; his gray head bowed upon his breast. All the fire had gone out of the old man ; he looked broken-down.

Presently he spoke.

"I did not expect to see you here again, but perhaps it's as well — it's as well."

He stopped, and fumbled in his pocket for his old pipe. He lighted it automatically, and there was something in the action which seemed to make him feel more like himself.

"I've been troubled, lad ; sore troubled," he said, not looking at Dino, but staring straight before him at the blazing wood upon the hearth.

"Sore troubled. It's like a storm out of a clear sky. First you, lad ; first you, and then the young master. I counted upon you to help me take care of the little girl, Dino."

He spoke with long pauses between his words.

"Your father was my friend once, an' I trusted him, an' he betrayed me. I never told you before ; it didn't seem fair-like ; but he betrayed me. He thought to take everything for himself. But you can't get happiness i' this world without doing something for it ; it is n't enough to be willing to rob others. There's no cheap way o' cheating Heaven, lad ; a man can't buy Heaven at half-price."

He sat still for a few minutes breathing heavily. Then he rose, and, taking up the candle, he crossed the room, and unlocked the door of a small cupboard, in which Dino had always known him to keep his few valuables ; his certificate from the captain of the shipwrecked steamer ; his dead wife's silver-mounted rosary, and whatever money he happened to possess. He returned holding in his hand the embroidered portfolio full of bank-notes which Gasparo had left with Italia.

"Some o' it has to be taken back to the young master. But there's three hundred francs in there, lad, o' my very own. I earned it fairly ; and the old master always meant it to be mine."

Three hundred francs ! It's a deal o' money that. I don't know as I ever saw so much money together before."

He smoothed the folded notes with eager trembling fingers.

"It's all yours, lad ; all of it. Take it and pay off these men as have got the hold on you. It's a deal o' money that—three hundred francs. More than a man could put by in five years' saving. I never could save nothing myself. They'd do many things for that, they would. You can pay 'em off easy."

And then, as Dino made not the smallest movement to grasp the proffered money, "Here, take it, boy," he repeated, trying to thrust the little roll of notes into the young man's clenched hand. "Take it ; it'll be more than made up to me if you are good to my little girl."

It was impossible to make him understand that the money could make no difference.

"It's three hundred lire, that's what it is. Three hundred lire," he said doggedly ; "and I earned it, fair, that night o' the wreck. I never thought then it would have to go to pay-off rascals ; but I'd do more than that, I would, to please the little girl."

But at last Dino's persistent refusal roused the old man to something more like anger. "If you won't, you won't. It 'ud have been more

above-board to have said it from the beginning.—If you must drown yourself, at least drown yourself i' the deep sea. That's my way o' thinking.— You could talk there all night ; it's easy work talking. *Colla lingua in bocca si va a Roma*—a man can get as far as Rome if he has a tongue in his mouth. But it proves nothing ; it proves nothing."

He pushed the bank-notes across the table, flattening them out under his strong fist. "There 'tis. And now take it or leave it, for there 't is before you. You can choose."

Dino rose and reached his hat. "There are many things you will understand better later on, Sor Drea," he said simply. Then he looked all about the room. "I'll not see this again. And I've been very happy here. If ever the time should come when you think you judged me harshly, you'll be glad to remember that, perhaps,—that I thanked you and wished you well at the very last."

And then as the old man still sat silent, with bowed head, "Will you shake hands with me before I go, Sor Drea ?" Dino said, coming nearer. He looked very noble at that moment standing there, with the firelight shining full upon his young resolute face.

But Andrea never lifted up his eyes.

"The devil teaches a man how to do things,

but not how to hide 'em. I thought you was an honest lad at one time, Dino,—I did," he said bitterly; and let him go without another word.

Drea sat there for a long time after he heard that closing of the outer door. By and by Italia re-entered the room. She came and went softly, busying herself with the preparation of her father's supper. Presently she came near the fire and knelt before it, screening her face with her outspread fingers from the blaze while she watched the boiling water in the kettle out of which she would presently make the coffee.

She was observing her father furtively under shelter of her fingers, and before long she turned a little and rested her cheek against his knee.

"You must be tired, father, and hungry. And you have let your pipe go out; poor father!" she said in a deep tone of loving anxiety.

"Ay, child."

Andrea shifted the pipe slowly to his other hand and laid his disengaged fingers fondly upon the girl's thick hair.

There was a silence between them while the water bubbled and hissed upon the hearth. But as Italia stooped to lift the saucepan Drea checked her. He said:

"I've done what I could, child; what I could."

"Yes, father."

"*His* father was the same sort before him. I never told you, but Sora Catarina there, she was my sweetheart once, when we were all young together. And his father was my friend, and he took her away from me. And I was fond of her then, I was."

Italia drew his hard hand down against her cheek, and kissed it softly, without speaking.

"Ay. I was fond of her once—main fond. And 'twas partly for that, perhaps, I always had a sort o' fancy for the lad. I never could bear to be hard on him. An' he's disappointed me. It's i' the breed, my girl; a bad breed, and you can't alter that with wishing. You can't turn a porpoise into a dolphin, no matter how long you leave him in the water."

As still she made no answer, he added more insistingly:

"I'd have saved you from this if I could, my pretty. I did all I knew how. But you can't get a grip on the anchor when there's no bottom but only shifting sand. Faithlessness—Look here, girl, it's like poison in one's daily bread." He stroked her cheek tenderly. "My girl, it's poison, you *can't* live on it."

Then Italia lifted up her head.

"Dino is not faithless," she said gently.

"Girl, no one believes in him. Not a soul. Not even the young master—and they were boys together."

"I do, I believe in him, father."

She knelt with clasped hands gazing at the fire, and all the ardor and devotion of her impassioned soul sounded in her soft girlish voice. For the moment she felt superior to all suffering, uplifted to a region of feeling which knows neither lassitude nor reluctant pain. And such love makes all things easy; it floods dry places; it drowns the slime and weeds. It is good, no doubt, to be strong; it is wiser to be the master of our fortunes than their slave. The truth is obvious enough. But we are not all strong, God knows; let us still be thankful for that divine gift of pity,—tender and loving pity,—the heritage of the outcast; the last possession of the disinherited, of the unsuccessful; who, owning this, shall yet know something, even on this earth, of the very kingdom of heaven.

After a while she rose to her feet; she laid her gentle hand upon the old man's shoulder. "Come, father. Come to your supper. You are so tired, dear; you must let me take care of you. For the harder things are, father, the more we will need each other's love," Italia said.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WITH VALDEZ.

THE sun was not more than half an hour high in the east when Valdez and Dino started in their boat to row up the disused canal to Pisa. It was a mild gray morning. A pearly-tinted sirocco sky hung low above the flat country beyond Leghorn ; on either side were stretches of bare ploughed land ; the only color was in the thick fringe of tall yellow reeds which bordered the canal, and on the scarlet-stained leaves of the water-plants and brambles which had survived the winter, hidden deep under the faded bents of last year's grass, in sheltered nooks below the overhanging banks.

It would have been easy to tow the boat : there was a narrow path trodden out along the margin by the feet of the men who still dragged the slow weight of their flat-bottomed barges, laden with barrels of oil and sacks of corn, in preference to sending the merchandise to Pisa by the new line of railway. But Dino liked better the labor of rowing against the sluggish current. The mon-

onous action soothed him like the reiteration of old words which carried pleasant memories. He felt more himself with the oars in his strong young hands ; and the long regular sweep of the blades was like a visible sign of the vigor and force of his determination. About nine o'clock it felt very warm upon the water. The March sun shining behind the thin gray veil of mist, filled the sky with a diffused whitish glare,—and there was no escaping it, no possibility of shadow. By the time he had rowed eight or ten miles Dino was glad enough to act on Valdez's suggestion, and run the boat to land under the shelter of some drooping alders. They stretched themselves out luxuriously on the short new grass, where a point of smooth ground projected for a few feet from the bank. The water gurgled with a cool liquid sound as it hurried past them, and the air was sweet with the smell of bruised herbs. There was a tuft of scented thyme growing by Dino's feet. He plucked off a leaf or two and held them in his hand while he said :

“ It is pleasant being here, Valdez.”

“ Ay, lad.”

“ I like rowing. I like everything which implies being out-of-doors,—doing something and being no one in particular. If I had to live over again, Valdez, I'd have more to do with men than books.”

"You may be right there, lad, there's no saying. After all, a man's personal experience is the only reality; the rest is mere hearsay."

Dino crushed the aromatic herbs closer within his hands, and rubbed them over his face. "Valdez!" he said abruptly, "that man over there—in Rome—you know whom I mean—I know nothing about him; he has done me no harm."

"No, lad. And I see what you mean. But that's just the puzzling part of it—when things pull both ways. But there must come a time in a man's life when he ceases to ask himself questions, when he must give up even wanting to know how well he may be doing the work that's been set before him, or else the work does n't get itself done. For, look you, lad, in a way, what is absolutely bad is nearly as satisfactory as what is absolutely good. It's black or white; and a man—a man, I say—can understand either. But it's the thing between—it's life—which upsets our calculations."

"It's so damned hard to know that, do what one will, one can never get any credit for it. If you stake your life on any desperate attempt to make things a little better, people always imagine it was your own choice, you liked doing it. They don't ask what it was that made you give up the pleasantness; if you get credit for anything, it's

only credit for a morbid taste for being wretched."

"Credit from society? credit for what you do? why, lad, who gives credit for anything now, except the tradesmen? And they are not in society," said Valdez, with a short laugh. He pulled the brim of his shabby felt hat farther down over his eyes. "Society cheapens life. Makes it full of small interests, small triumphs, small, bitter disappointments. I've been through it; I've seen enough of it in my day."

"Valdez," said Dino, looking at him rather curiously, "you must have been leading a very different sort of life before you came to Leghorn? You yourself must have been very different?"

"Ay, lad, a different sort of fool, most likely. There's a variety in fools, or life would be too monotonous. I've been among a good many people in my time," he added in his deepest voice; "but all that's past now. Past and forgotten. And what's over is safest let alone. It's twenty years now since I've been tuning pianos. 'T is a good trade; and one must live somewhere."

He rolled over on the damp grass, and thrust one arm up under his head. "You have had a good deal to do with making me stay there so long, my Dino. I was a lonely man; it has made a wonderful difference to me that feeling that, at

any minute, you might be coming in and out, making a noise, knocking about in the old rooms ; they would seem quiet enough without you. You made a wonderful difference."

" Well ! it's over now," said Dino, pulling up a tuft of grass and hurling it far into the water. " It's gone like that."

" Lad, you take things too hardly. I'm an older man than you, and I tell you you should believe in happiness. The flower of life is a gift, Dino, without money and without price. The supreme gifts of the gods can neither be discussed nor deserved. Believe in happiness ; expect it ; make room for it in your life ! Have faith ! Faith moves mountains. And Happiness is of the swift-footed Immortals, and descends only on the garlanded altars of her worshippers."

The old man was curiously roused out of his usual reticence and quiet. As they got into the boat again a pale gleam of sunlight pierced through the gray vapor overhead and rested on the distant buildings and spires of Leghorn.

" Ay, twenty years. I've lived there for twenty years," Valdez murmured, looking back at the shining curve of the white houses beside the sea.

" Shall you go back immediately ? I mean — after Rome ?" Dino asked presently, taking up the oars.

Valdez glanced at him keenly. "Maybe I shall, lad. There's no telling. I'll see you safely to the end of your journey first." After a pause he added, "We'll wait till it gets dark, and then walk on to Bocca d'Arno. I know a man there will give us a bed to sleep on. And then we can separate for a day. I will carry the revolver up with me to Rome and wait for you there. The review is not till Friday; your best plan is to go home first for a day. And it's safer if I have the pistol with me. The police might take it into their heads to have you watched and searched at the last moment. You can't tell. And a little extra precaution costs nothing."

"Why should you think the police suspect anything?"

Valdez shrugged his shoulders.

"*Chi lo sa?* Everything and nothing. There were men I could not account for at the door of your house when I came out yesterday. And that young Marchese friend of yours, I had some words with him in the street. He spoke of your getting into dangerous company. But it may be only my fancy; who can tell?"

As they drew near Pisa the country stretched before them a flat ploughed plain, of a pale reddish brown, crossed by interminable lines of furrows. There was not a sign of life anywhere about.

The light sandy soil of the plain stretched to the far horizon like an expression of unrequited labor ; for where the green rows of maize had already pierced the ground the crop promised to be poor and thin and stunted. The country was extraordinarily silent. There was not even a lark singing under that low-roofed sky. The dark line of pine-trees where the king's preserves begin were all blown one way, and only the wind seemed alive, a full and rioting sirocco wind blowing with insolent unconcern across these empty fields, as though mocking at their record of patient and unsuccessful toil.

The two men left their boat at the last bridge, just outside the city gates. Valdez was familiar with every turning of the Pisan streets. He led the way now, without hesitating, to a small dingy shop not far from the Duomo, where the revolver was soon purchased, Valdez insisting upon going in alone to buy it.

And then for hours they sauntered up and down the quiet thoroughfares, over the bridges, along the quay by the yellow Arno. The deadly stillness of the place weighed with a sort of physical oppression upon Dino. The hours stretched themselves out until he could scarcely believe that it was only in the first freshness of this same morning that they had turned their backs upon Leghorn. He was in a state of half-weary,

half-dreamy unconsciousness, like a man under the influence of some strong opiate. Emotion was dulled and deadened. He talked constantly to his companion all through that long spring afternoon ; he found amusement and occupation in speculating about the passing faces. Anything was better than the silence which threatened him with the awakening of that dull pain, which, whenever he ceased speaking, seemed to make a new clutch at his heart.

It was dusk when they left the small suburban *café* where they had eaten supper, and passed under an old archway into the high-road which leads to the sea. But, late as it was, they were not the only travellers afoot and bound for Bocca d'Arno. They had walked scarcely a quarter of a mile before they overtook two peasant women, a mother and daughter, on their way home from making purchases in the town, and presently, as they all four walked abreast along the country road, they fell into converse together. Valdez began questioning the elder woman about the crops. Then he asked her if she sent her children to the communal schools.

“ *Che ! schools ! yes, indeed !* that was a likely idea, to carry the *bimbi* four miles there and four miles back every morning that God sends us.”

The old democrat looked grave. “ And are

there many children who cannot read in the paese, my good woman?"

"Eh, Signore! There is my second cousin, the *guardia* of the forest, he is an old man now; he has been there all his life, and he gets fifty-six centesimi a day, to support himself and his family. It is likely, is it not, that he should trouble his head if the children cannot read the books? and they are good children."

"How many has he?"

"E-e-h! *tanti!* Now, two of the boys are grown up enough to work in the wood as foresters. And that helps. He doesn't poach, my cousin," the woman said regretfully, turning her sensible face towards Valdez; "another man would, *si capisce*. But my cousin — he cannot see well. And then he misses the game he shoots at. He has no luck about him — not enough to make you wink your eye."

She walked on a few yards and added, "The Padrone! ah, yes, that is another sort of weaving! The Padrone is a banker in the city: when he comes to shoot, he brings his luncheon with him in his pocket; two hard-boiled eggs; that's for fear he should leave any bones behind him. Is it not true, Isola?"

Valdez laughed, and the girl walking beside Dino opened her blue eyes frankly and looked up in his face. "That is true what my mother

says. But you are not like your friend there, you do not care for the schools?"

She was pretty, even in this dim light it was easy to see how pretty, with a round babyish face and crisp fair hair. She wore a bright cotton handkerchief knotted over her head, and in her hand she carried a large bundle.

"No. I am not so wise as my friend. But at least I am good for some things," said Dino, smiling down at her. He put out his hand, "If you will trust me with it, we are going the same way. I can carry your bundle."

The peasant girl drew back. "Nay. What should you do that for?" she objected quickly. Then after a pause for reflection she suggested, "Perhaps that is the fashion in the country that you come from, to carry other people's burdens?"

"Surely."

"*Guardate!* But that is quite different. No one would do it here; not even the *sposo*."

"Are you going to be married soon, Isola? I think I heard your mother call you Isola."

"Ah, yes; Isolina; that is what they call me. I shall not be married until next Carnival. It is a long time off, but what would you have? When one is poor one must learn to make oneself small enough to pass through the cat's hole. That is what I tell my Pio." She ended with a laugh, a clear ringing bird-like sound.

"Tell me about him," said Dino, smiling sympathetically, with a sense of pure comradeship in her youth, such as he had never felt before. All that was living and joyous and young asserted its claim over him ; he looked across the road at the two middle-aged faces of their companions with an exaggerated perception of what they had outlived. Life, young buoyant life, seemed the one thing to be valued. He was sick of tragedy. What he wanted was easy youthful laughter, and the warm bright satisfaction of being. The innocent chatter of this little peasant girl satisfied him better than all the theories about all the universe. He listened in a sort of vague dream to the rippling flow of her talk. When she ceased speaking he yielded to the impulse that was strong within him ; he told her about Italia. What he said was very little, only that he and his sweetheart were parted ; he put it in the simplest words which she would understand.

She listened ; then she turned her bright face towards him, glowing with spirit and brave interest. "Oh," she said, "I know what it is like, for there was a time, one week, when they would not let me speak to my Pio."

She talked to him now of herself as to an old friend ; with the unhesitating frankness of a child ; the young man was strangely touched and pleased by her simple confidence.

When the footpath grew narrower she walked on in front of him. She walked well, with an easy carriage; her firm bare ankles gleamed in the moonlight below the hem of her short cotton gown; her loose wooden shoes made a short quick tapping at each step which she took.

The night was very warm and still. On one side of the road the Arno flowed past silently; the pale light in the sky was reflected upon its glassy surface as upon a sheet of metal; it looked like a river of lead. As the moon rose a faint wind stirred softly among the budding branches of the lime-trees which edge the fields, and the delicate shadows of the moving stems fell upon ploughed land. In each isolated farmyard the hay-ricks, cut close for last winter's fodder, assumed a curiously velvety texture as the moonlight rested on their blanched and weather-beaten tops.

As they drew nearer the mouth of the Arno the spreading pines of the Gombo made a dark line against the sky to their right and across the river. The fields grew wider; the night was full of a new sound which was not the sound of the wind. Dino listened more intently; his quick ear could distinguish the muffled beat of the waves upon the sandy shore.

Presently they reached the borders of the wood; the footpath ended; the soil grew sandy

underfoot. At the turning of the road there were lights burning in some cottages. The peasant women stopped at the door of one of the houses.

"Good-night," Isolina called out in her friendly voice; "good-night again; and thank you for the civil company."

She disappeared amidst a rapturous chorus of welcome from the farmyard dogs. She had brought to Dino a charmed hour of forgetfulness; he watched her turning away from him with an air of regret.

Later, as they lounged upon the beach, smoking their pipes in the still moonlight, Valdez said, laying his hand affectionately upon Dino's shoulder, "I liked hearing you laugh with that little girl to-night, my lad. You were such a light-hearted lad in the old days. You're fretting now. Courage! my Dino, courage! There are no depths for a brave heart from which hope cannot mount; hope which outlasts gold and the grave. And, for a man, whatever the consequence of his action may be, even to have meant well, is sufficient excuse in the eyes of the woman who loves him. Excuse? it's a vindication which, nine times out of ten, will make her end by asking him to forgive her suspicion."

"I know it; but it won't save Italia from suffering," said Dino quickly.

Valdez was silent. Then he said, "Did it never occur to you that there is a chance, just a chance, of your getting away after all? Think of the crowd and the confusion. And if you once get outside of Rome the Society will soon find means of taking you safely beyond the frontier. There is always that chance, you know."

"I don't believe it," said Dino, turning away abruptly.

But the words haunted him—"There's always a chance"—"always a chance;" they rang their changes upon his brain far into the wakeful night. Once, towards morning, unable to sleep, he rose and groped his way to the door of the hut belonging to Valdez's friend and host. The shore stretched before him, and the moonlight on the wild sea grass. When the moon went under a cloud the wet sand by the edge of the receding wave was of a bright steely blue; far away near the horizon the light still shone, a streak of burnished silver, upon the tranquil sea.

Valdez was sleeping quietly; Dino went back and threw himself down by his side.

It was late when the young man awoke. The little hut was empty; his companion had gone hours before, leaving behind him a message, a few scribbled words, to say that the fishing-

smack which was to take Dino back, by another route, to Leghorn, might be expected to call at Bocca d' Arno towards sunset that same afternoon.

There was food and water in the hut. It was one of those small thatched cabins, built for the use and shelter of the owners of the great stationary nets suspended from beams and worked by means of a crank, of which there are several by the mouth of the river.

Dino spent the long day in the woods. It was a lovely morning when he first went out, with a touch of April sweetness in the air. It is a wild and silent shore. The flat-topped pines grow to the very verge of the sand-hills. On the sea side the forest ends in a thick undergrowth of dark-spreading juniper bushes, which fill the hollows of the dunes and mingle with the thistles and the tough salt grass. And the wood itself is always filled with the sound and savor of the sea. Before a storm the white-winged gulls flit wildly in and out between the pine tops. There is fine white sand underfoot beneath the moss and the fallen needles, and thick growths of all strong-stemmed aromatic sea-loving plants; blue rosemary, and tufted heather, and great golden-crested reeds. Dino lying in one of those sheltered hollows, with closed eyes, could scarcely distinguish between the melancholy

murmur of the trees overhead and the sleepy murmur of the restless waves. The very air had its mingled breath of salt and spiciness, of the sea and the resinous pines.

By Monte Nero all nature had seemed dead in his eyes ; the downs there had been nothing more to him than an empty hillside, a dull background to his own dominant existence. But here, in this still wood — perhaps because of his very surrender of that existence — there was infinite charm and interest in every moment of the long calm hours. He felt himself a mere spectator watching the natural life of things. He found occupation for half a morning in seeing the warm spring sunshine creep across the straight pine stems ; in looking up at the tender blue of the sky above him ; in listening to the myriad small noises of the woods ; bird notes, and the tapping of the woodpeckers, the hum of insects, the cracking and stirring of the branches, and the rustling furtive tread of shy four-footed creatures, young rabbits, and bright-eyed squirrels, or the quick darting of green lizards across the thin, short grass.

Once he reflected, “They will say in the papers, afterwards, the prisoner passed a day before his crime concealed in the woods at Bocca d’ Arno. ‘Concealed in the woods !’ But will it mean *this* to them ?” He looked

down, between his elbows, at a patch of greenest moss ; a miniature pine-tree, some three inches high, raised itself proudly above the other small plants, and a couple of shiny-backed beetles wandered up and down its stem. Dino felt in his pocket for crumbs, and strewed them before the insects, but the motion of his hand frightened them away. Presently a company of red-headed ants came up out of the ground and attacked the provisions. Two of the ants fought one another for a particular crumb. Dino watched their movements with the intensest interest. When they had vanished — “The prisoner passed the day before committing his atrocious crime concealed in the woods of Bocca d’ Arno,” he repeated solemnly, and he laughed aloud.

No one came near him. Once he heard some quick footsteps and the cheery whistle of a woodman tramping along some hidden path on his way home to dinner. And once, from between the leaves of the neighboring alder thicket — young leaves so brightly green that they might be mistaken for flowers — there came a heavy rustling sound which excited his curiosity. He strolled over to the place, and peered in between the branches at a pair of those great melancholy-eyed white oxen common to that part of the country.

Something in the presence of those "slow moving animals, breathing content," reminded him of his little *contadina*. A sudden wish to speak to her again made him abandon his wood. Inland, a broad, wet ditch, half full of faded sea-heather, divided him from the ploughed fields. He jumped the ditch, and there, hard at work behind a hedgerow, he stumbled upon Isolina.

Her short blue gown was tucked up above her knees; her scarlet kerchief was hanging loose from her hair; she was digging away like a man, and her bright, childish face was all rosy and warm with the exertion. She nodded in the most friendly fashion to Dino as he came nearer, but time was too precious to be wasted on mere talk this busy morning. Only, as he moved away again, she held her spade suspended in the air for a moment, and her round cheeks grew pinker still as she said, "As you pass through the farther field, will you greet my Pio for me? Give him *tanti saluti*, for I have not seen him to-day."

"Shall I tell him I left you making the cat hole bigger?" asked Dino, beginning to laugh.

Her white teeth flashed. "Tell him to dig away at his own end of it." And presently Dino heard her voice singing as he strolled away between the moist brown furrows.

He had no difficulty in finding Pio, a short,

thick-set *contadino*, with a smiling, good-natured face below its thatch of thick, irregularly-clipped hair, brown hair burned red by the sun. His face was tanned to the color of yellow bricks, except at the temples and behind the ears, where there were bits of white skin. He wore a ring on his hand, and used the most singular gestures in speaking.

Dino sat down on the edge of the ditch among the weeds and grasses to watch him at his work. Valdez would have talked of common schools, perhaps of politics; would have tried most likely to drive some faint idea of social equality and the rights of labor into this sturdy peasant with the Figaro face. The more Dino looked at him the more remote he felt from any impulse of proselytizing.

This idyllic love-making, with its simple interests and its simple cares ; its messages sent from field to field ; — its *naïveté*, its sincerity, its security, — ended by plunging Dino into the profoundest melancholy. For the first time he absolutely realized what was this thing which he had undertaken. He gazed at the young fellow beside him ; he noted how the strong muscles played along his back as he bent to his work, and the vigorous vital grip of his horny hand.

“ Will that piece of ditching be done to-morrow ? ” he asked suddenly.

The *contadino* straightened his shoulders and kicked aside a heavy clod. "Na—ay. I'll be at work here all o' Friday, if the master does n't put me at something else," he said slowly.

At work here o' Friday,—and Friday was the day of the review. Dino's whiter hand was lying across his knee; he clenched the fingers together with a sudden passion, and thrust his doubled fist into his pocket. His hand, in his own eyes, had seemed the hand of a corpse.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### GOOD-BY.

LATE that afternoon, as Dino sprang out of the fishing-smack on the stone steps of the landing-place at Leghorn, the first person whom his glance rested on was broad-shouldered Maso sitting on the edge of the quay with his legs and feet dangling over the water. He got up slowly as Dino came nearer, and nodded with cheerful friendliness.

"I know that boat you came in. She's a Bocca d'Arno smack, she is. The man who owns her lives at Pisa."

"So he does, Maso."

Dino looked rather anxiously about him. It seemed only too probable that old Drea was making one of that blue-coated group of fishermen who were sitting a dozen paces off on a coil of old ropes, criticising the craft that passed at this leisurely hour of the day, when the nets had already been looked after, and there was time for a pause and the smoking of pipes before the night work began. And Dino did not

wish to meet the old man again. He shrank from having to feel once more the altered look of that face ; all the old affection felt bruised and sore when he remembered it. He would have turned away now without further speech, but Maso detained him.

"Are n't you coming back to work in the *Bella Maria*, Dino ? She's short-handed now with only Sor Drea and me. 'T was all we could do to manage the nets this morning. I asked the Padrone if you were n't coming back soon."

"Ay ; and what did he say ?" asked Dino, rather eagerly. It would be a comfort still to know that his old friend could speak kindly of him.

Taciturn Maso took off his round cap and scratched his thick, curly hair with an air of consideration. "Well, I dunno," he said dubiously. "He swore at me for being a fool, as far as I can remember. But *that* was n't much of an answer—that was n't. An' yet somehow I did n't seem to miss nothing."

"But did n't he say anything ? Try and remember, Maso ; there 's a good fellow. Did n't he say : 'Oh, Dino is going away,' or, 'Dino has other business to attend to ?' He must have said something, you know."

"Well, he did swear at me. I told you that

already. But, good Lord! some people are never satisfied unless the words come in shoals, like the mackerel when the sharks are driving 'em ashore. An' it's Maso here, and Maso there, till I want to put my head in a bucket o' salt water; I do. That's why I like Italia to speak to me," he added reflectively. "She never says too much, and her words are sort o' pretty, like the sea in a calm, when the water is just dozing and making a pleasant noise."

"Have you seen her?—have you seen Italia to-day, Maso?" asked Dino, his heart beginning to beat faster.

"Oh, ay; that's why I came here to wait for you. I saw your boat; I knew her by the cut of her sails before she was fairly round the point yonder. But I'd ha' brought her in on a shorter tack if I'd had the steering of her—I should."

"What—what was it Italia wished you to tell me?" asked Dino, making a strong effort to control his impatience and not excite the wonder of the honest, slow-witted young fellow by his side.

"It was n't so much of a message after all, when I think o' it. I say, Dino, you know Sora Lucia? She lives at the top of that big house in the Via Bianchi."

"I know—I know."

"Well, you were to go there, now, this afternoon. Sora Lucia wants to speak to you. That was what Italia told me. She told me twice. But, Lord, I'm not such a stupid as that. I can remember what *she* says fast enough."

"Very well, then; I'll go now," said Dino, feeling rather disappointed. Still it was possible that the little dressmaker might have some message for him. He turned back to inquire of Maso how it was that Italia knew of his return so exactly.

"Nay, how should *I* know?" retorted Maso reproachfully. "You don't suppose I asked her, do you?"

He stood on the quay staring after young De Rossi with a look of the most sincere admiration dawning in his big blue eyes. Dino was in some sort of serious scrape, he reflected gravely. Else why did n't he come back to the old boat? And to have time, and opportunity, and invention enough to get into a serious scrape was in itself a distinction in honest Maso's eyes. It was almost like being a gentleman. They got into lots o' trouble, did the Padroni.

"It all comes of his having an eddication," he pondered enviously, leaning against the parapet and looking at Dino's back.

It was not far to the corner house in the Via

Bianchi. Dino went slowly up the many stairs ; it was impossible to say what he expected, but his heart beat very fast as he stopped before Lucia's door, and at first he was not sure, he could not tell, if there had been any answer to his knock.

"*Avanti, Avanti.* Come in ; I cannot leave the work," a woman's voice repeated briskly, and he opened the door. The first glance showed him that the big room was empty of what he most desired. There was no one in it but Lucia, who was standing with her back to him engaged in pressing down the folds of a gown with a hot iron.

"Oh. So that's you, Dino ; is it ?" she said brusquely, without turning her head.

"I came as soon as I got your message. I have only just returned from Bocca d'Arno, Sora Lucia ; and I met Maso on the quay."

"Oh. 'T was Maso that told you ; was it ? See there now. And I who always took him for a sort of two-legged sea-calf, with only just sense enough in him to fall in love with Italia."

"Maso ! that fellow !"

"Well, well. I am not talking Latin, am I ? *Santa Vergine*, it would be a fine world if all the men in it were to keep their eyes shut because a certain young man — *Basta*. I understand what I mean."

She nodded her head several times, and took up another iron, holding it carefully near her face to determine the exact degree of heat.

Dino sat and looked at her in silence. The clock ticked loudly on its shelf, and the dozing cat, awakening to the fact of the presence of a visitor, stretched itself two or three times sleepily, and then made a spring and perched itself on the young man's knee. He rubbed the creature's head mechanically until it purred. Then he put it down gently on the ground and stood up.

"I thought you might have something to say to me, Sora Lucia. But if not I will ask you to let me wish you good-by now. I have not seen my mother yet: and I am going away—I am going to Rome to-morrow."

"Ah, Rome is a fine city," said Sora Lucia briskly. Then she bent her head over her work again and added: "I, too, have business in Rome. I have a cousin there, my own flesh-and-blood cousin, who has a shop for beads and rosaries and objects of devotion in the Borgo. Not more than a stone's throw from the house of the Holy Father, as one might say. I may be going up to Rome myself one of these days. It seems as if Leghorn wasn't good enough to stay in any more. The whole world's travelling."

"*Dunque*, I'll say good-by without troubling you further, Sora Lucia."

"Oh, you'll not go without a greeting to the *nonna* first. She's wonderfully pleased when people remember to say good-by to her," said Lucia hastily, putting down her irons with a clatter.

She went to the inner door and opened it.

"Beppi. Run to the grandmother, child, and say that Dino de Rossi is here and waiting to make her his *saluti*.—And tell Italia that I want her. Say that I want her; do you understand? These children have not so much head as a pin between 'em all," she said hastily, coming back to her work with almost a blush upon her thin pale cheek.

Dino looked at her with great agitation. "Does Italia know—Sora Lucia, if Italia should not wish to see me—"

"She's not here to see you. She is paying me a visit," said the little dressmaker, sharply. "And not the worst tongue in Leghorn could blame the girl for coming here. It would be a fine thing, indeed, if I had to give up all my friends to please you, Sor Dino! I—*Santa pazienza!*!"

The door opened again, and Italia came in, leading by the hand a very old woman, who steadied herself at the door, and dropped Dino a series of small tremulous courtesies.

"I don't remember who the Signore may be, Lucia; but you know who he is. I'm a very old woman, now, sir; very old. I don't rightly remember how many years 't is now that I've been living; but I worked for forty year at the marble works, I did; forty year picking over the rags to pack the marble."

"There, *nonna*, come and sit in your own chair by the fire; that's what you like best," said Lucia, glancing half guiltily at Italia.

The girl did not notice her. She had silently given her hand to Dino as she came in. They stood so for an instant without speaking; then she slowly lifted up her dark eyes. There was no young smile in them now, and her dear pale face had grown rigid and strained. She looked as if all the gladness had been killed within her. Only her voice had not changed; its full clear ring sounded like a mockery now after meeting that look of infinite misery in her eyes.

"I wanted to say good-by, Dino."

"Yes."

"And I wanted to ask you, when you go to Rome, could not little Palmira go with you? Will you take her, Dino? Please take her."

"Palmira? take that child? But, dear Italia, indeed it would be quite impossible!"

He was surprised into speaking very abruptly.

"Would it? I did not know. But I wish

you would," Italia murmured, looking down at her hands. She added hurriedly, and hardly moving her lips: "If any one were watching your movements; if they suspected you of anything; it would be safer to have the child."

"But, dear, I could not take her. It is impossible. Why, for one thing, I have no money. What could I do with the child in Rome?" Dino urged, still speaking with the vehemence of surprise.

She shrank away a little. "I did not know. I think it could be managed."

"Italia, Italia, I want to ask you about this work; you always know the right thing to advise one," said Lucia in a hasty voice, looking up from her ironing.

But when Italia came to her she said nothing, only pushing back the girl's heavy hair, and giving her a little pat on the cheek. "There, go away, go away, child. You are interrupting me. Go and talk to the *nonna*."

The old woman was watching the fire, her eyes following its flickering motion like the eyes of a young child. She said in a quavering voice as Italia laid her hand on her shoulder, "My knitting, Maria; have you brought me my knitting?"

"Grannie always calls Italia Maria," observed the small Beppi in an explanatory manner to

Dino. "She says Maria do this, Maria do that, and all the while she's speaking to Italia."

"It was my mother's name," said Lucia, nodding her head. "She's dead these twenty years, the saints have her soul ! but the *nonna* does n't remember."

Italia was kneeling before the purblind old dame, picking up the dropped stitches in a coarse woollen stocking. "Now it will do nicely, dear *nonna*," she said in her clear grave voice ; and the grandmother laid her trembling hand upon the girl's thick hair and stroked it ; "You were always a good child, Maria ; always. Now Lucia there, she never married, an' there's many a thing she doesn't understand,—many a thing,—many a thing."

"Italia, will you fetch me the body of this dress ? I left it in the other room on the table," said Lucia suddenly. She waited till the girl had passed through the open door, then she hurriedly turned and looked at Dino : "Go — go and help her find it !"

He went straight up to the girl and caught both her hands in his.

"My dear, my love, if there was anything I could do or say to comfort you. I would give my life — my life ! to undo the harm that I have done to you, Italia."

"Oh, no," she said hastily, and disengaged her

hands and bent her head over Lucia's work.  
“Dino.”

“Yes, dear.”

“I wanted to ask you. There is just one thing.” She bent her face until it nearly touched the table. “They tell me so, and I cannot contradict it,” she murmured; her sweet lips contracted and grew pale.

“What is it, dear? Tell me. Tell me, Italia.”

“Ah, there is no other woman whom you care for, then, at Rome?” Her voice was scarcely audible, and she turned her head from side to side without looking at him.

“Italia!”

He caught hold of her hands again, and forced her to meet his glance. “Upon my honor—no! There is no other woman for me in all the world but you. And I love you, Italia,—I love you, I love you,” Dino said.

She bent her head a little. “I did not know.” Then, still without looking at him, “Now—I shall not be so unhappy, my Dino.”

Sora Lucia came as far as the doorway and looked in. “You have found the bodice, Italia? Well, well, there is no hurry for it, none at all.”

“I'm coming, Lucia—directly.”

She clasped both her hands together, and held them out mutely.

"Italia," he said, seizing them, "I must ask you this. Is it true about Maso? would your father make you marry him? For God's sake tell me!"

"I can't grieve my father," she said faintly; "he has only me. But — Dino" — her eyes seemed to pierce his very heart as she looked at him — "oh, my poor Dino!" she said. And she stooped and gathered up the scattered pieces of work from the table, and left him standing there alone in the room.

He could never remember what happened after then until he found himself out in the street, walking towards home through the still spring twilight.

But the next day, just as the Roman train was starting, a woman dressed very neatly in black, and holding a child by the hand, came running along the platform, looking in at the windows of the third-class carriages. It was Sora Lucia with little Palmira; they had scarcely time to secure their seats in Dino's compartment before the train started.

"You may well be surprised to see us; you may well look astonished, Sor Dino," the little dressmaker began nervously, as the engine puffed out of the station.

"But oh, Dino, Dino, it was Italia's plan!" broke in little Palmira, clapping her hands ec-

statically. "And she asked mother to let me go with Lucia, only mother would n't tell you because it was to be a secret. And Italia said that Lucia would have to go and see her cousin, and you would take me to look at the wolf, Dino. Dino, will you take me to look at the wolf?"

"What does this mean?" the young man demanded rather impatiently, fixing his eyes on Lucia, who only tossed her head, affecting to be absorbed in examining the fastening of the window.

"And, Dino, Italia sold her ring in a shop, her beautiful new gold ring that the Signor Marchese gave her on her birthday. She sold it to get the money to send us, because Lucia had to go and see her cousins, who have a shop in the Borgo," continued little Palmira in an awestruck voice. She had never seen Dino look so strangely; his face was quite white, and he did not seem at all pleased to see them. The prospect of feeding the wolf grew fainter at every minute, and Palmira's small pale cheeks began to flush ominously.

"There, there, little one. Don't cry. There's a good little girl," said Dino hastily, and patting her kindly on the head.

He lowered his voice and turned to Lucia. "Was this Italia's own idea? Did no one suggest it to her?" he asked anxiously.

"Nay, if you want to know so many things about Italia, Sor Dino, 't is a pity you could not stay in Leghorn long enough to ask her the questions yourself. But you prefer leaving the people who care for you to dry their own eyes and look after their own concerns. Well, well, it's the way of the world apparently. And you take your own responsibility. After all, one's actions belong to oneself ; you can't have other people's babies," said Sora Lucia dryly. And she continued to look out of the carriage window till they were well on their way to Rome.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE FIRING OF THE SHOT.

VALDEZ seemed very much struck by the news of little Palmira's arrival. The child had gone to spend the night with Lucia at the house of her cousin. "But you can call for her there in the morning, my Dino. Ay; call for her and take her with you by all means. So Italia sent her after you? Ah! it needs a woman to think of a thing like that. Ay, take the child; 't is the one surest way of diverting any suspicion. And I'll be near you, lad, at the time; I'll look after her; I'll look after her."

The old man had placed both food and wine upon the table in the small lodging which he had secured for himself and De Rossi, but Dino did not even make a pretence of eating.

"You'll be fit for nothing to-morrow, lad," Valdez remonstrated, looking at him rather anxiously.

"I want nothing — nothing," said Dino with passionate impatience, turning his back upon him and beginning to pace up and down the narrow room.

"Nay, have your own way, lad ; have your own way."

Dino went and stood by the window, looking out at the small, dimly-lighted street. A slight shower of rain was falling ; he stood there for a long time idly watching the reflections of the gas-lamp opposite upon the glistening stones.

"Valdez," he said abruptly, "where do you suppose I shall be at this time to-morrow?" But he went on without giving him time to answer. "It's an odd thing—that feeling that one has done with one's youth. I've had an experience that has made everything different to me. I could not go back now; no more than a man could go back to being a child. Perhaps I was n't worth much before. I never thought of that. But I think I might be of some use if I were to live now, Valdez."

"Ay, my lad. You've made a great difference to me as it *is*," the old man answered tenderly.

Presently he, too, rose from his chair and went and stood beside the window.

"There was one thing I had to tell you ; I nearly forgot it. I've been to see the head men of the committee since I came up here, and I've settled one thing for you,—after to-morrow your name gets struck off the books. I've done one or two things for them in my

time," Valdez said slowly, "and they owed me something. I never asked them for anything before. And I made myself responsible for you in this matter, lad; I answered for you at Leghorn." He laid his hand on Dino's shoulder. "It was I who brought you into this thing at the beginning. And I made a mistake. You're not fit for it. But you've never reproached me with what it costs you, my lad; never once."

Dino looked at him vaguely, as if he scarcely understood what was said.

"I'm not afraid, if that is what you mean," he said simply. "I never *was* afraid for myself. It is only leaving the others that I mind—Italia, and the mother, and old Drea. You don't know how good they have been to me, Valdez. I don't know why. It seems now as if I had never done anything for it. But I'm not frightened. You need not think I'd play you false at the last."

"No, lad; no."

"I offered once to give it all up—to throw everything over—for Italia. She would not let me. But you don't know how I hurt her, Valdez. And I can never make it up to her now."

"Ah! she has a brave heart, that girl," said Valdez in his deepest voice. "A brave true

heart. And courage and passion, Dino, you can't go beyond that,—courage and passion, they're the immortal facts of life. Where *they* pass, the world marks the spot."

He shifted his grasp a little, and let his hand rest upon the young man's arm. "Come to bed, boy. Give over thinking. You are tired out, my Dino; you need sleep," he said, speaking with a strange new gentleness. As for himself, he never went to bed at all. Through the long dreary hours of the night he sat patiently waiting in the darkened room for the sun to rise upon a new day.

Dino had thrown himself down upon the hard couch at the end of the room. He slept heavily, the sleep of young exhaustion. Once, towards daybreak, he started up suddenly with an exclamation of alarm.

"Valdez! I thought it was morning, Valdez."

"Nay, lad; I'll call you when the time comes; go to sleep."

"What sort of a night is it now?"

The old democrat rose stiffly from his chair; he felt cramped and sore from the long night's watching. He pushed aside the scanty curtain. "The rain has stopped. It'll be a fine day to-morrow."

"So much the better," Dino said. "I should like the sun to shine." His head dropped again

upon his hard pillow. The candle had burnt itself out in its socket. There was no sound in the room but the heavy breathing of the weary sleeper and the ticking of Valdez's watch, which lay before him on the table. He sat there, counting the hours.

And at last the dawn broke, chill and gray; the dim light struggling in at the window made a faint glimmer upon the glasses which stood beside the untouched food. To the old man keeping his faithful watch beside the sleeper, this was perhaps the hardest hour of all—till the darkness wore slowly away; the sky turned to a clear stainless blue; and all the city awoke to the radiance of the April day.

Soon the bells began their joyous clash and clamor. It was hardly eight o'clock when the two men stepped out into the street together, but the rejoicing populace was astir already, and hurrying towards the new quarter of the Macao.

Rome was in festa, heavy and splendid Rome. Bright flags fluttered, and many-colored carpets and rugs were suspended from every available window. All along the Via Nazionale, a double row of gaudily-decked Venetian masts, hung with long wreaths and brilliant flapping banners, marked the course where the royal carriages were to pass. But it was farther on, at the Piazza dell' Indipendenza, that the crowd

was already thickest. The cordon of soldiers had been stationed here since early morning. Looking down from any of the neighboring balconies upon that swarming sea of holiday-makers, it seemed impossible that even the great Piazza could contain more; and yet at every instant the place grew fuller and fuller; a steady stream of people poured in from every side street; peasants from the country in gay festa dress; shepherds from the Campagna in cloaks of matted sheepskin; and strapping black-haired girls with shrill voices and the step of queens, who had come all the way from Trastevere to look on at the spectacle,—there was no end, no cessation to the thickening and the growing excitement of the crowd.

Dino had taken his place very early. It was exactly at the corner of the Piazza, where a street-lamp made a support for his back, and prevented him from being brushed aside by the gathering force and pressure of the multitude. He had found a safe place for Palmira to stand, on the iron ledge which ran around the lamp-post. The child's little pale face rose high above the crowd; she was quiet from very excess of excitement, only from time to time she stooped to touch her brother's shoulder in token of mute content.

Valdez stood only a few paces behind them.

He had kept the revolver in his own possession to the last moment. It was arranged that he should pass it to Dino at a preconcerted signal, and as the King came riding past for the second time.

Dino had scarcely spoken all that morning, but otherwise there was no sign of unusual excitement about him. He was deadly pale; at short intervals a faint red flush came and went like a stain upon his colorless cheek. But he answered all little Palmira's questions very patiently. The morning seemed very long to him, that was all. He stood fingering the handkerchief in his pocket with which he was to give Valdez the signal for passing him the weapon.

It was more than twenty-four hours now since he had tasted food, and the long abstinence was beginning to tell upon him; at times his head felt dizzy, and if he closed his eyes the continuous roar and chatter of the crowd sank — died away far off — like the sound of the surf upon a distant shore. At one moment he let himself go entirely to this curious new sensation of drifting far away; it was barely an instant of actual time, but he recovered himself with a start which ran like ice from head to foot; it was a horrible sensation, like a slow return from the very nothingness of death. He shivered and opened his eyes wide and looked about him.

He seemed to have been far, far away from it all in that one briefest pause of semi-unconsciousness, yet his eyes opened on the same radiant brightness of the sunshine ; a holiday sun shining bravely down on glancing arms and fretting horses ; on the dark line of the soldiers pressing back the people, and the many-colored dresses, the laughing, talking, good-natured faces of the gesticulating crowd.

One of these mounted troopers was just in front of Dino. As the human mass surged forward, urged by some unexplainable impulse of excitement and curiosity, this man's horse began backing and plunging. The young soldier turned around in his saddle, and his quick glance fell upon Palmira's startled face.

"Take care of your little girl there, my friend," he said to Dino good-humoredly, and forced his horse away from the edge of the pavement.

Dino looked at him without answering. He wondered vaguely if this soldier boy with the friendly blue eyes and the rosy face would be one of the first to fall upon him when he was arrested ? And then his thoughts escaped him again — the dimness came over his eyes.

He roused himself with a desperate effort. He began to count the number of windows in the house opposite ; then the number of policemen stationed at the street corner ; an officer

went galloping by ; he fixed his eyes upon the glancing uniform until it became a mere spot of brightness in the distance.

Hark !

The gun at the palace. The King was starting from the Quirinal. All the scattered cries and laughs and voices were welded together into one long quavering roar of satisfaction and excitement.

There—again ! and nearer at hand this second gun.

The cheers rise higher, sink deeper. He is coming, the young soldier King, the master of Italy, the popular hero. See ! hats are waving, men are shouting,—the infection of enthusiasm catches and runs like fire along the line of eager, expectant faces. Here he comes. The roar lifts, swells, grows louder and louder ; the military bands on either side of the piazza break with one accord into the triumphant ringing rhythm of the royal march. They have seen the troops defile before them with scarcely a sign of interest ; but now, at sight of that little isolated group of riders with the plumed and glittering helmets, there comes one mad instant of frantic acclamation, when every man in that crowd feels that he too has some part and possession in all the compelling, alluring splendor and success of life.

And just behind the royal cavalier, among the glittering group of aides-de-camp, rode the young Marchese Balbi. He was so near that Dino could scarcely believe their eyes did not actually meet ; but if Gasparo recognized him he gave no sign, riding on with a smile upon his happy face, his silver-mounted accoutrements shining bravely in the sun.

And so, for the first time, the doomed King passed by.

Dino scarcely heeded him ; at that moment he had forgotten everything unconnected with the sight of that one familiar face. His mother, his old home, — Italia even, — had grown dim and unreal ; he forgot them all in the sensation of that quick rush of renewed affection. All the old pride, the old delight, in Gasparo, which had made so great a part of his boyhood, came back upon him with the irresistible claims of reawakened tenderness. He was there to commit a murder ; and out of all that crowd he saw only the one face which he knew — and he loved it.

That curious sense of floating away, far away from everything living, fell upon him again. He lost all count of time. He could never tell how long it was before he heard little Palmira cry out in shrill tones of childish excitement :

“ I see him, Dino. There he comes again. The King, the King all in gold ! ”

Dino started, it seemed to him as if he started wide awake. He drew himself up like a soldier standing at attention ; his brain was steady ; his senses all alert. He watched eagerly ; the white plumes were slowly advancing between the two serried ranks of the soldiery. He waited until he could distinguish the King's face distinctly ; he saw him lean a little forward and pat his restive horse —

And then, without turning, he gave Valdez the preconcerted signal.

And even as he raised the handkerchief to his lips he heard, not ten paces off, the sharp ringing report of a shot.

It was all over in an instant — the sound — the plunging of the frightened horses. He saw the white plume of the King pass by unscathed, and Gasparo Balbi, who was riding nearest him, throw up his arms and fall backward, quietly, into the rising cloud of dust.

A great cry broke from the people all about him — it rang in his ears — it sounded far away like the beating of a furious tide upon the distant, distant shore. A blackness, a horrible blackness which he could feel, passed over his face like a cloud. And then he knew nothing more.

Some quarter of an hour later one of the two *guardie* who were helping to lift his insensible

body into a street cab looked compassionately down at Dino's clenched hands and pallid death-like face.

"'T is no wonder the poor *giovane* fainted," he said sympathetically, addressing the little crowd about him. "'T is no wonder he fainted. *Perdio!* as it so happens I was looking straight at him, — he was not ten paces away from the villain who fired the shot."

## CHAPTER XIX.

VESTIGIA NULLA RETRORSUM.

ONE cloudless April morning, some three weeks later, the warm bright sunshine was making a pleasant difference even to the prisoners who were taking their usual hour of exercise between the four high walls of the paved courtyard at the Carcere Nuove. But there was one among them, a middle-aged man with gray hair and a curiously piercing look in his heavy-lidded eyes, who seemed to be expecting something beside the blue sky and the soft air of this balmy morning. And presently that something came.

The other prisoners looked after him rather enviously as he left the court in answer to the turnkey's imperative summons. Apparently he had been sent for to speak to a friend ; they grumbled a little between themselves at this sign of the governor's favor.

It was Dino de Rossi who was waiting for Valdez in that small high-walled cell. The two men had not met since the morning of the

attempted assassination ; they grasped hands and looked into one another's face with an emotion which lay too deep for mere speech.

Presently the older man's mouth relaxed into a faint smile. "Well, lad. So you have come to see me. You are looking better. They told me you were very ill, and I've been anxious about you," he said simply.

"I came to you as soon as I could get up," Dino answered, in a voice that was broken with repressed feeling. He looked about him, at the prison bed, the grated window, the bare stone walls. "You've put yourself here, — here, in my place, Valdez. Valdez, it nearly drives me mad to remember it. I'd give half my life if I could change places with you to-day."

"Nay, my lad, there's nothing the matter with the place. It's comfortable enough ; and it's of my own choosing. Come, come, my Dino ; you're weak still with the fever ; sit down, lad, sit down."

They sat down side by side on the narrow straw pallet. Then Valdez added cheerfully, "And there's better news still of your friend Gasparo this morning. I'm glad of that. I bore the young man no malice ; I'm glad to think he's likely to get over it, after all."

"Valdez, I never could understand that part of it ; they said at the trial you wanted to shoot

him purposely. They said you had had some quarrel with him?"

"Ay, lad. There was no denying we had had words together; and that fat old fool, Sor Giovanni, whom they got up from Leghorn as a witness,—he was willing to swear till he was black in the face that he had heard me threaten to murder the young Marchese." He lowered his voice and added, "I'd had my directions beforehand — from them, up at the committee there — what to say in case the attempt on the King proved a failure. I know the best thing I can do for them is to hold my tongue. If the judges chose to shut their eyes to what's staring them in the face, it's not my duty to correct their blunders. But they wanted to hush it up, lad; they did not want to make it into a political scandal, with those elections coming on."

He was silent again. Then he turned and laid his hand affectionately, in the old way, on Dino's shoulder.

"How are they all at Leghorn, boy?"

"All well. I had a letter from my mother this morning."

"And Italia?"

Dino half smiled. "Well too. She sent me a message for you. She wanted you to know she never would believe you had meant to hurt anybody. You don't mind my telling you, Valdez? She meant only what was kindest."

"Ay. She's a good girl that; a good girl. And when are you going back to them all, my boy?" he asked suddenly, fixing his companion with his piercing glance.

Dino flushed red. "I shall stay and see you through it. Valdez, that is little enough to do for you. You don't think I would leave you till I see you free?"

"Nay, lad," said the old man very gently, "you'll let me have my own way i' this matter, I know. I've seen you; and you know I'm pretty safe as it is. Unless things take a bad turn for that young Gasparo, they can't do much worse to me than shut me up in prison for a bit. And that's nothing."

He started up to his feet, and began pacing backwards and forwards between the four walls of the narrow cell.

"The plan's miscarried. It may have been a good one or a bad one, but we know where the orders came from, and it was n't our place to judge of that. And I don't judge of it. I've chosen my place in life, and I'll abide by it to the end. When a man has meant anything strongly, there's never any real going back again for him. It is n't the failure or the success, it's the purpose, the will that is in him, that makes the difference."

He stopped, leaning against the wall beneath the grated window.

“What is the whole teaching of daily life, my Dino, if it is not to accept the material success — *le fait accompli* — as if it were a very law from Heaven? Not to do that, they tell us, is to be a fool or a madman; it is to shut one’s eyes against evidence, and one’s ears against common-sense; to wear out friendship and to forfeit sympathy. That’s the lesson you may learn at any street corner, and, if you listen, you will hear it cried out in the wilderness. It’s what your old fisher friend, how do you call him? old Andrea, has preached to you. ‘T is the Alpha and Omega of many a good man’s philosophy. But I,” the old socialist drew himself up, and his eyes flashed fire, “I think otherwise. To me, half the time, material success, and what society teaches, and what poverty enjoins, are but the negation of every high ideal, of every disinterested protest against injustice, of every struggle against social tyranny and bitter social wrong. That’s my creed, lad. That’s my creed, and, good or bad, I’ll never turn my back upon it. No! not if I had to spend every hour of my existence here!”

“I wish to God that I could do more than merely understand you; I wish to God that I were capable of feeling with you, believing with you, Valdez.”

“Nay, lad, you’ve tried; you’ve done your

best. And when you found you'd undertaken more than you could well accomplish, still you went on,—you went on. To be faithful, my Dino, to keep faith simply and joyously, is to reach and hold the essential best of life. But to keep faith at any price, in any fashion ; to do it even grudgingly, counting the cost, looking back at the world with all its temptations, yet, even then, moving away from them, however slowly—well, even that is enough to give some touch of divine dignity to a life. It is reaching the end without the glow of the triumph, but still the end *is* reached. We can't all of us claim the praise as well as the victory, and yet the victory is there."

He spoke with all the force and fervor of a life-long conviction. The faint light streaming in at the small high window gave a solemn look of isolation to the narrow room ; it seemed a fitting background for the worn, undaunted face.

But presently the old man's glance softened. He held out both his hands.

" You're young, lad, you're young, and all the best of life's before you. It makes me glad to think of that still. For you've made a great difference in *my* life, Dino. And it hurt me, ay, it hurt me to think that I had injured yours."

"Valdez — if I'm ever worth anything — if I ever learn to believe unreservedly in anything — Oh, I can't say it. But you know what I mean ; — I owe it all to you."

They grasped one another's hands hard, as the key turned harshly in the lock of the door behind them. They spoke no word of farewell.

Palmira was waiting for Dino in the jailer's lodge by the entrance. The child gave one quick anxious look into her brother's quivering face, then she slipped her hand quietly into his without speaking. Both were silent until they stood outside the iron gates. Then Dino stood still. He was weak yet, and confused from the fever. He could scarcely understand how much of what was passing around him was real. He stood there hesitating ; surely it was no delusion that he had pledged his very life away ? Yet he stood there, a free man, in the April sunlight, with the hand of a little child in his ; and behind him was the prison door.

He crossed over to the small piazza ; he went and sat on a wooden bench beside the fountain ; it wanted an hour yet to the time of the starting of the Leghorn train.

"Are we not going back now, my Dino, to Italia ?" Palmira asked, after a long pause, eying him anxiously.

"Ay."

He answered like a man in a dream. And it was a dream of coming joy which held him silent ; a vision of flood-tides filling all the empty places of existence ; a happy vision of love, strong to conceal and strong to forget ;—of Italia, waiting by the sea.

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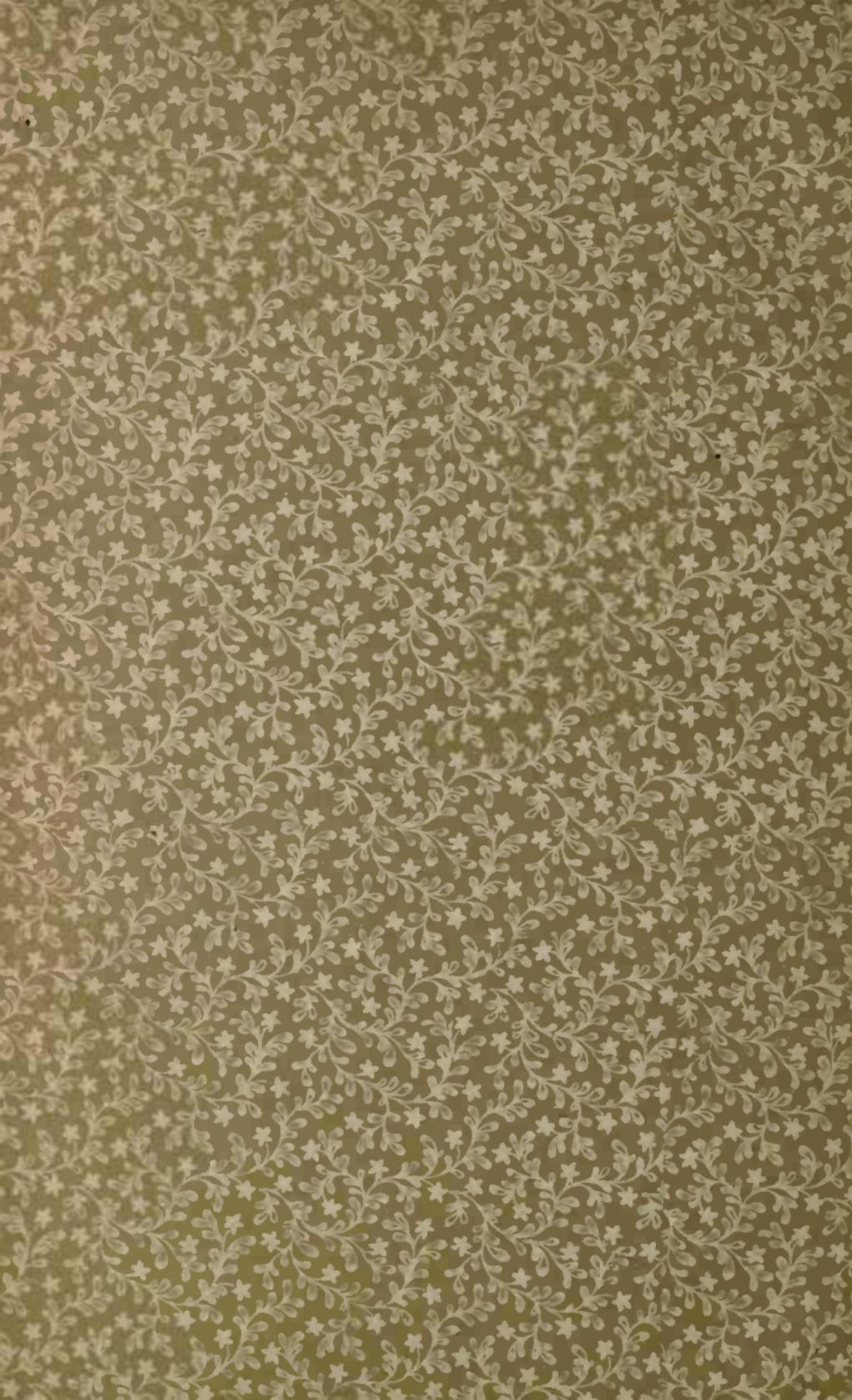
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